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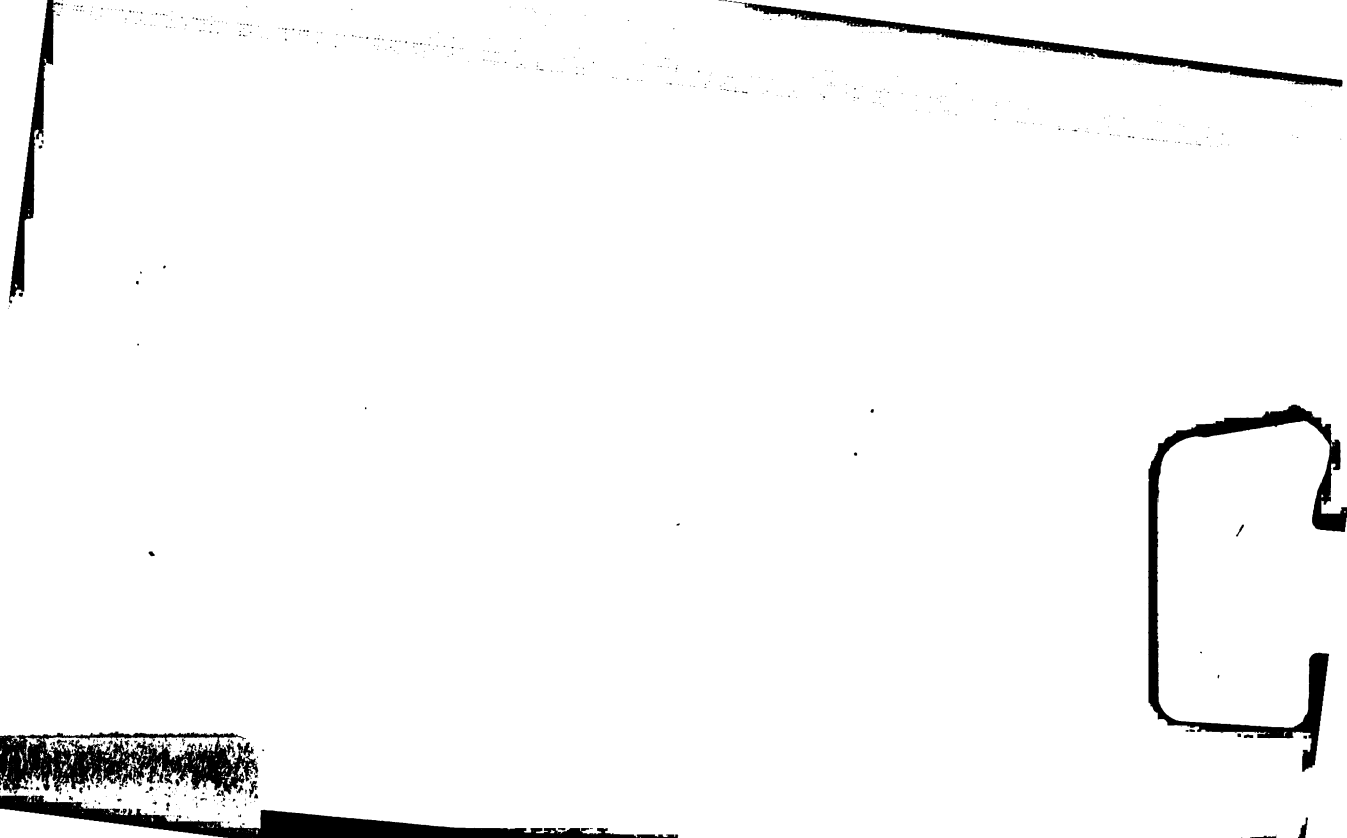

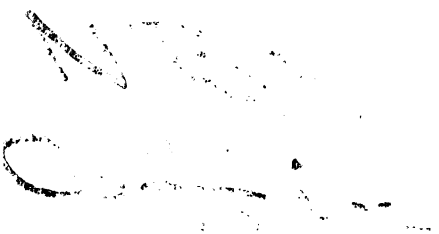

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

My Married Life at Hillside.

FOURTH EDITION NOW READY.

ALSO, IN PRESS,

TO BE PUBLISHED IN DECEMBER,

My Summer in the Country,

AND

Out of Town,

BEING RURAL EPISODES.

By BARRY GRAY.

MATRIMONIAL INFELICITIES,

WITH AN OCCASIONAL FELICITY, BY WAY OF CONTRAST.

BY AN IRRITABLE MAN.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED, AS BEING PERTINENT TO THE SUBJECT, MY NEIGHBORS, AND DOWN IN THE VALLEY.

By BARRY GRAY.

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DEDICATORY LETTER

TO

SANDFORD R. GIFFORD, N. A.

My dear S. R. G.:

To you, one of my oldest and most valued friends, the playmate of my boyhood, the companion of my manhood, whose society has ever been to me a source of more than ordinary enjoyment; and, during these latter years, in the contemplation of whose pictures — the reflex of nature in her most charming moods — I have experienced unqualified delight, I dedicate, with much satisfaction, this little volume of "Matrimonial Infelicities"; trusting, however, that the experiences therein set forth by an "Irritable Man" may not deter you from entering the arena of married life, and, under your own grape-vine and apple-tree, presiding as *pater familias*.

Your disposition — like my own — is so essentially different from the irritable individual's who wrote these sketches, that I am satisfied the best life — that of a married man's — which this world can afford, would fully compensate you for leaving your bachelorhood behind you, and taking your place among the Benedicts. And, although the gratification I now experience of gathering my bachelor friends around my mahogany, would be lost, if you, and other artist companions whom I might name,

were to marry, yet I would be willing to forego even that pleasure, and with it the hope I have long entertained of one day in the future beholding in our circle a bachelor of three-score years, provided you and they would follow the worthy example I have set you.

If you should for a moment believe that the following infelicities are the usual accompaniments of marriage, I beg leave to state that, so far as my own experience goes, it is utterly at variance with such record.

In conclusion, I desire to express the hope that we both may live, still united by the same bond of friendship, as many years in the future as we have in the past, which would bring us each to a hale old age.

I remain,
with regard and esteem,
your friend of many years,
BARRY GRAY.

FORDHAM, *N. Y., July 25th*, 1865.

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MATRIMONIAL INFELICITIES.

FIRST INFELICITY.

CONVERSATION AT THE BREAKFAST-TABLE.

"MY dear," I said to the lady who was seated opposite to me at the breakfast-table, and who has the good fortune to be my wife, "if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to receive a cup of coffee that looks as if it had been sipped from before it reached my hands. Have I not often asked you to fill my cup to within an eighth of an inch of the rim, and not give it to me half or three quarters full?"

"You are as particular as an old bachelor," the estimable lady replied, "and if I had known it before I married you, this day would not have seen me your wife. There, sir, is your cup of coffee. I hope it will suit you."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, as I took the cup, "now you 've managed to run it over. You certainly must be aware that if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to find slops in my saucer."

"Well, if you will insist on my filling the cup, you must expect that sometimes I shall spill it over; besides, your finding fault with me does no good, but makes me nervous, and causes my hand to tremble, so that I only wonder there is any coffee left in the cup. But here is a clean saucer, in place of the one you have."

Having effected this important change, I tasted the contents of my cup. It was evident to me that there was no

sugar in it. I tasted it again to make certain of the fact. Then I said to her, —

"You have neglected to put sugar into my coffee. If there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is coffee unsweetened."

"I am certain," replied my estimable spouse, "that I *did* sweeten it. I don't think you have stirred it."

"But I know I have," I answered.

"Not with your spoon," said the provoking woman, "for it is perfectly dry; perhaps, however, you used your fork."

"Pshaw!" was all the answer I vouchsafed to this remark.

"Now, I declare," I said, after having stirred and sipped my coffee, "you have made it too sweet. If there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to have my coffee taste like syrup."

"Let me put more milk with it, then?" said the obliging woman.

"No, I thank you," I replied; "I don't care to have my stomach turned into a dairy. I gave up milk diet when I cut my first teeth."

"It is to be hoped that you will give up the habit of fault-finding, which you possess in an eminent degree, when you come to cut your wisdom-teeth, though no one can tell when that will be."

"Thank you," I replied; "you will probably be the first who will know it when it occurs."

"And a happy day it will be for me," she answered, with provoking calmness. "Few know, though, how much unhappiness your constant fault-finding causes me. Nothing I do seems to give you any satisfaction. There is n't a moment elapses, while you are in the house, save when you 're asleep, but you are thus occupied. The truth is, I have always been too indulgent with you, and humor you when I ought not. I did n't commence right in the first place. I should have paid no attention to your whims, but

studied my own convenience and comfort, instead of seeking to make everything smooth and pleasant for you. Then I would have got along much better. Oh, you men are great tyrants, and if a woman yields to you in the least, you follow up your advantage, and bend her will to yours, and crush her spirit to the earth, till, by-and-by, you break her heart."

"My dear, I will thank you for another cup of coffee," I said, passing my cup to her; "but be careful not to run it over, nor get it too sweet, nor put in too much milk. What an intolerable steak this is," I added; "it is tough enough to have been cut from one of the cattle pastured upon a thousand hills more than a thousand years ago. If there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is a tough beefsteak."

"You selected it yourself, at the market, so you need n't find fault with me on account of it. I knew it was tough the moment I looked at it."

"Then why did n't you send it back?" I inquired.

"Because, as it was of your choosing, I supposed you wanted a tough one; besides, if I had returned it, you would have found fault with me for doing so."

"Well, I can't eat it, that's certain," I said; "so it had better be taken off of the table. I sha'n't throw any more money away on beefsteaks."

"Oh, it will answer for hash," said my economical wife, "and you can have it for dinner."

"Hash!" I exclaimed. "If there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is hash. Hash is only fit for children and old people without teeth. Besides, it is a popular dish at boarding-schools and boarding-houses; and when I was a boy, and afterwards while a bachelor, I ate my share of it, and I'm not going to eat any more. No; we 'll have a turkey for dinner."

"Very well," said my spouse, "a turkey let it be. Shall I see to getting one?"

"I think not," I answered. "The fact is, that all the turkeys you select turn out to be like the celebrated one of which Job was the reputed owner, — poor and tough. No; I'll buy the turkey, and you can cook it."

"Very well," said the imperturbable lady. "But how will you have it cooked?"

"Oh, any way; suit yourself," I answered.

"Then I think I will roast it," she replied.

"Roast it!" I exclaimed. "That is just like you. Now you know that if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to have a turkey roasted."

"Very well, then," said the accommodating woman, "I will boil it."

"Boil it!" I said, aghast. "Boil soup, boil lamb-chops, boil cherries, if you like, but never, for me, boil a turkey."

"Pray, then, how will you have it cooked? Only tell me, and it shall be done."

"Why — why — well — fricassee it, of course," I answered, triumphantly.

"Very well," said the lady, looking, however, as if it were not very well.

"Why can't you say something else besides 'very well'?" I asked. "What a provoking woman you are, to be sure."

"Not half so provoking as you are," she replied.

"Now, then, you wish to make me angry, I suppose; but you can't do it," I said. "I have put up with everything all through breakfast, and I am not going to be provoked just as I am finishing."

"I am sure I don't wish to provoke you," my wife said, in a most innocent and aggrieved manner.

"But you certainly do provoke me," I replied.

"Then I am sorry for it," she answered, in a softened tone, "for such was not my intention."

I looked across the table at my wife; something like a tear rolled down her cheek.

"Goodness!" I whispered to myself, "I have made my wife weep. What — a — what — a — brute I am."

Then, speaking aloud, I exclaimed, —

"Darling!"

"Well," was her calm reply.

"Do you know," I continued, "that if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is a tear."

She answered simply with a sad smile.

"Sweetheart!" I said.

"Well."

"Cook the turkey any way you please."

She shook her head.

I left my seat, (having finished my breakfast,) went to her side, and smoothing her pale, wan cheek with my hand, I kissed it, and said, —

"Forgive me, dear, this time."

She smiled dubiously, as if "this time" was only one out of the "seventy times seven" which she would be called on to forgive during our matrimonial career; but, nevertheless, the pressure of her hand, which I had taken, assured me that peace was made.

SECOND INFELICITY.

MY WARDROBE.

"IF there be one thing I dislike more than another," I said to my beloved spouse, while engaged in arraying myself in purple and fine linen — (my necktie is of purple silk, my wristbands of linen) — preparatory to attending the last artists' reception, "it is to find no buttons on my shirt-bosom."

"In that case you should wear studs," said the lady to whom I spoke.

"I did," I replied, "until you complained that they wore the buttonholes out faster than you could keep them in repair. Besides, when thus worn, the studs would drop out and be lost. And did n't you find fault, too, with their blackening the shirt-pleats, so as to make it impossible to wash out the stain?"

"That was because the studs were not good gold."

"I don't know what you mean by *good* gold," I replied; "but Tiffany assured me, when I purchased them, that they were eighteen carats fine; and I know the last I had cost enough. Yes, and when I told you how much I paid for the set, you declared me to be extravagant, and immediately computed the number of loaves of bread I could have bought with the same money, — I have forgotten how many, but it was a large number. I made up my mind at that time never to buy any more studs, but to let you sew on buttons. Besides, if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is studs. One is certain to lose them. I remember I lost those."

"You *said* you lost them," my wife replied, in a doubt-

ful tone of voice; "but when that peerless creature, your cousin Musidora, called here the other day, I noticed that the studs in her chemisette were exactly like those you lost. I never could understand, either," continued the provoking woman, "how you managed to lose the three at the same time, and that, too, the day before Christmas."

"My dear," I said, "your facetiousness is very ill-timed; for I presume you are joking when you insinuate that I robbed myself of studs to give them to Musidora. That hers resemble those I possessed does not surprise me, for she is a girl of excellent taste; and as her father, who owns diamond washings in Golconda, has business relations with Tiffany, I doubt not that she purchases her jewelry at his store."

"Perhaps so," was all my wife vouchsafed in reply.

"The fact is, my love," I remarked, as I turned over my assortment of collars in search of one properly done up, "you are jealous of Musidora. Now, if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is jealousy."

"Indeed, sir!" exclaimed my wife.

"Good gracious!" I cried, changing the subject, "there is n't a collar in this box fit for a Christian to wear. Some have no starch in them, and are as flaccid as a last night's party glove; others are like sheet-iron in their stiffness; this one is ironed on the wrong side; that one is n't ironed at all; those are ironed on both sides; and the rest are either smutched with soot or stained with iron rust. Now, what shall I do?"

"I'm sure I don't know what you 'll do, if there be none there that will answer, unless you send out and buy one," said my imperturbable spouse.

"Send out and buy one!" I echoed. "You know very well that if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is a new, shining, greasy-looking collar. I always have them done up in a decent manner before I wear them. I detest a new collar."

"How would it answer," suggested my wife, "to go to the reception without any?"

"It might answer for you, but not for me," I replied, "but just examine that lot of collars yourself, and tell me if there be a decent one among them, — fifty, at least, and not one fit to wear."

"I find nothing the matter with this collar," said my wife, examining the first she took from the box; "it seems irreproachable."

"Let me see it," I exclaimed, taking it from her.

I scanned it carefully. It was in all respects a model collar. How I had overlooked it, I could not tell.

"And this," said my wife, producing another; "and this," she continued; "and this."

I took each one and examined it. Even my critical eye could find no flaw in any of them. They were perfect examples of the laundress's art. Suddenly an idea occurred to me.

"They could not have been in the box," I remarked, "when I opened it."

"They certainly were," my wife said, decidedly.

"They were not, or I should have seen them," I reiterated, just as decidedly.

"Well, have it your own way; but I know they were there," she replied.

"But you won't let me have it my own way," I answered.

"Yes, I will," she said.

"Well, then," I continued, "you confess they were not there?"

"I do no such thing," she replied. "I simply say you can have your own way."

"Very well; then I say they were not there."

"But I say they were," she exclaimed, with considerable spirit.

I saw there was no use in arguing the matter, so I re-

mained silent, although I felt I was imposed upon. I suppose I shall learn, by-and-by, the impossibility of convincing a woman that she is in error. All your assertions, all your logic, all your arguments, are thrown away upon her. She holds fast to her first idea with a tenacity which is admirable when it coincides with your own correct judgment, but obnoxious in the first degree when opposed to it. Thoughts like these passed through my mind, but were suddenly checked, when, on attempting to draw on one of my boots, I found it to be half full of water.

I know I am an amiable man, not given to fault-finding unless incited thereto by aggravating circumstances, the endurance of which would be criminal instead of praiseworthy. On the present occasion, therefore, I uttered an objurgation savoring less of paradise than of hades, which caused my wife to exclaim, —

"My dear, why do you speak so?"

"Who would not speak so, I should like to know," I answered, "if he found his boots turned into a ewer, or something worse? That mischievous boy of ours must be corrected. He engages in all kinds of tricks; and I don't see why you can't keep an eye on him through the day, and restrain him from mischief. You let him do just as he likes, however, and never correct him for any annoyance he may cause me. Because it does n't interfere with your comfort, you will sit by and look on unrebukingly. Of course, I am nothing."

"Now, my dear husband," she replied, "you are unkind and ungenerous. You know well enough that if I should find the little fellow engaged in any kind of mischief, I would put a stop to it. But if my back is turned for an instant, he takes that opportunity of doing something that he ought not. It is more than I am able to do to keep him in order and attend to my household duties. The entire time of one person is required to keep watch over him, and prevent him from doing that which he ought not to do.

For my part, I am very sorry that he has filled your boots with water, and I cannot imagine when he did it."

"But you should have kept him from doing it," I replied. "If there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to have my boots filled with water."

"It certainly is provoking," said my wife, quite coolly; "but I cannot help it."

"But you ought to have helped it," I said; "and your thinking it 'very provoking' is n't calculated to do any good. Your saying so rather irritates me than otherwise. Well, since my boots are wet, I must wear my shoes, I suppose; but where are they? I can't find them!"

"Why, I sent them this afternoon to be repaired; you know they needed it, and you said yesterday they had better be sent immediately."

"Good gracious! my dear," I exclaimed, "what an unreasoning woman! You do everything at the wrong time. Now, if you had sent those shoes yesterday, as I suggested, they would have been done by this time; but no, you must wait until to-day, and now, that I want them, they are not forthcoming. I wish to gracious you would just leave my boots and shoes alone."

"I shall, sir, hereafter, without fail."

"But what am I to do, I should like to know? The boots I have worn all day are too thick and heavy for this evening, and that other pair are uncomfortably tight."

"Suppose you wear your slippers, — those which Musidora worked for you; I am sure they are very pretty. By the way, they were a Christmas present: I had forgotten that. I shall question that 'peerless creature' about those studs the very next time she calls here."

"It will be very polite in you to do so," I answered, "and Musidora will, no doubt, be happy to inform you as to where or of whom she obtained them. You don't seem to admire my cousin Musidora?"

"No! but I do her brother Harry," she replied.

"You do?" I asked.

"Yes," she said; "is it strange I should admire such a handsome, gay fellow as he?"

"Gay, madam," I replied; "he is 'fast' — decidedly 'fast.'"

"But how charmingly he waltzes," she said. "I hope he will be at the reception to-night. Come, are n't you almost ready?"

"You forget," I replied, "that I have no boots to wear, so that it will be impossible for us to go this evening. Then it looks as if it would rain, and my head aches, and, on the whole, I don't think these receptions are very pleasant, — the rooms are generally so crowded, and man and wife are apt to get separated; and in the Tenth-Street building it is difficult to find one another again, amidst those endless galleries and studios. No, no, my dear, let us remain at home this evening and have a nice, cosy time together. Besides, if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is being in a crowd."

"But what will your cousin Musidora say if she does not meet you there?" she inquired.

"Oh," I replied, "I will tell her I was not well enough to go."

"Then you did expect to meet her?"

"Yes," I answered, unthinkingly. "That is," I continued, "I thought — well, no — no — but my head aches so I don't know what I am saying."

My wife smiled. After a pause, I said, —

"Poor Harry!" She smiled again.

"I am afraid he is going to the bad," I continued, "he is so very fast. He is a great flirt, too, and has been engaged to be married ever so many times."

"That reminds me, he is to be at the reception this evening with Miss Koorinski, the Russian beauty, whom report says he is to marry in June. He is very attentive to her, and never leaves her side, when in society with her, for a moment."

"What! what!" I cried, "he never leaves her side; she must be worth seeing. I think, after all, we had better go, — my headache is better, and I can wear my thick boots. This lady, Miss Kohinoorinski, or whatever her name is, must be wealthy, or Harry would never follow her about as he does. But where the plague are my gloves! I can't lay them down for a single instant but some one carries them off. If there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to lose my gloves. My dear, what have you done with them?"

"I assure you," my wife answered, "I have not touched them."

"But I am certain you must have done so," I replied, "for I had them in my hands only a minute since, and when I went to the bureau to get a handkerchief, I laid them upon your table, and now they have vanished."

"You dropped them into your hat, you mean, where, if you will look, you will find them."

"Well, I believe I did; but it's so provoking to mislay one's gloves. Come, are you ready? Why, how long it takes you; but it is always so with women — they everlastingly keep one waiting for them. Now, then, we're off; — stop! I must go back for my watch and porte-monnaie How provoking!"

"How provoking!" echoed my wife.

THIRD INFELICITY.

MY BOOKS AND PAPERS.

"HOW many times, my dear," I said to my wife, as I searched in vain for a newspaper which I had brought home three days previously, "must I request you not to disturb my books and papers? I've spent an hour, at least, in looking for a newspaper which contained a charming poem I had never before seen. I laid it carefully upon the mantelpiece, so that it would be out of the children's reach, and now it has disappeared. If there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to have my papers meddled with."

"What is the name of the paper?" my wife asked.

"I neither know nor care," I replied; "all I want is to find it."

"Have you examined both of the piles of newspapers on the mantelpiece?"

"Yes, of course I have," I answered.

"And the one on the table?" she continued.

"Which table?" I asked.

"There is but one table in the room," she answered; "that is a stand in the corner."

"Well, have it your own way; but I'm sure it is as much a table as the other. At any rate, the paper I want is n't on it. Now, why you can't let my papers rest just where I place them, I don't see. It would save me a wonderful sight of trouble and annoyance if you would only let them alone."

"I am certain," said my wife, "that I have not touched one of your papers in a week, and I don't think the children have."

"Then one of the servants has taken it to light a fire with. Now, if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to have a servant take a newspaper I wish to preserve, to kindle a fire with."

"I do not think," my wife said, "that any of the servants have taken it. My orders to them, in regard to helping themselves to your papers, are so strict, that they think it as much as their situations are worth to meddle with them."

"Well, then," I exclaimed, "if neither you, nor the children, nor the servants have taken it, I should like to know where it has gone to! Certainly it could not go without hands; and, now, who took it is the question."

"It is probable that you yourself laid it away, my dear," she remarked.

"Nothing can be less probable," I said.

"But you know you often do such a thing," she continued, "and forget all about it!"

"Never!" I said, decidedly; "I do not remember of ever forgetting anything in my life."

"Your assertion, my dear," she remarked, "proves conclusively the treacherousness of your memory, for I distinctly remember many instances of your forgetfulness."

"Well, I have never forgotten my age, as some persons have theirs," I said, maliciously.

My wife frowned.

"I don't see why," I continued, "that ladies, when they get a little *passé*, should wish to conceal their age. As for me, I glory in my years. Everybody knows that that child" — pointing to our eldest girl, a tall, slender miss of thirteen — "is your daughter."

"But every one does n't know," she remarked, mischievously, "who her father is."

I felt that my amiable wife had a little the advantage of me, so I returned to the newspaper subject again.

"I wish to gracious, my dear, you would find that paper for me."

"Have you looked into your desk for it?" she asked.

"I have not," I replied, and, what is more, I do not intend to, since I am very certain it is not there. Besides, the desk is locked, and I have the key in my pocket!"

"Perhaps you put the paper there, however," persisted my wife.

"Indeed I did not," I replied; "but, to satisfy you, I will open the desk."

To my surprise, the missing paper was the first object that met my sight on raising the lid of said desk.

"I told you so!" my wife exclaimed, exultingly.

Now my wife had not told me so, and I indignantly said as much.

"I think," I continued, after a pause, "I remember taking the paper from the mantel and putting it into the desk; but I had forgotten it."

"You ought to keep a memorandum of all such little things," suggested my wife, "and then you would n't find fault with me as often as you do."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, "if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is a memorandum-book. I think the keeping of one has a tendency to invoke forgetfulness. You are apt to depend too much on your pencillings, and too little on your memory. You, perhaps, might keep one with advantage to my comfort and the better performance of your household duties; but I don't require any yet. By the way," I continued, "where is that book I was reading last evening?"

"What one?" she asked.

"Why, Irving's Goldsmith," I answered; "one of the most charming biographies ever written."

"I placed it with others of the set," she answered, "in the library."

"There it is again!" I exclaimed; "you never will leave my books just where I put them. When I think I can go and lay my hand on the very book I want, even in the dark,

it is exceedingly provoking to find that some one has taken it away."

"You know that, as a general rule, I do not move your books; but when I see one lying on a chair, as I did this, I deem it best to put it into its proper place."

"Well, I'm sure, I did n't leave it on the chair," I said, "and I should like to know who put it there. I never had so much trouble with my books and papers until I was married. Nobody ever thought of touching them. If I chose to lay a book on the floor, in the middle of my room, I was certain of finding it in the exact spot, when I wanted it, even if it were a month afterward. The fact is, you mar all my plans with your continual interference with my books and papers."

"The fact is," chimed in my wife, "that if it were not for me, the house would be in disorder from the top to the bottom. You would have piles of useless newspapers in every corner, and books on every shelf, chair, and table. Look at the mantelpiece at this moment, — fifty old newspapers on it, and not one of them worth anything; then there are a dozen books, covered with coal ashes and cracking with the heat. How untidy it looks. Besides, whenever I dust the mantel, each paper and book must be taken off and carefully replaced, else your ire is excited to a terrific degree, and you pour out the largest sized vials of wrath of which it is possible to conceive. One would think, if but a single paper be missing, that a whirlwind had passed through the house, scattering your entire collection of books, magazines, pamphlets, periodicals, etc., to the four quarters of the globe. Then, too, at such times, you go about like a raging lion, and I, the children, and the servants, have to get out of your way, until you have found the missing paper, which usually you yourself have mislaid, when, instantly, you become as quiet as a lamb."

"Good gracious! my dear," I said, "how you exaggerate."

"No, I don't exaggerate in the least," she replied; "the simple truth is even greater than what I have stated. Just recall the naughty expressions you use! I should think you would have more regard for your wife than to speak such words before her. What if the children should learn them? Could you ever forgive yourself for having used them? Oh, you may whistle 'Home, sweet home!' if you like; but your doiug so will not change the fact."

"Well, well, my dear," I said, "we will say no more about it. If you think it best to remove my papers and books from the mantelpiece and tables hereafter, I will find no fault with you for doing so. But if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to have my books and papers touched by a woman."

FOURTH INFELICITY.

FRIDAY'S SWEEPINGS.

I HAD seated myself at my desk, in my library, a morning or two since, and, as it promised to be a rainy day, contrary to my usual habit, I resolved to remain at home, and finish writing an article I had commenced. I felt certain I should have no visitors from abroad to disturb me, and trusted I would be equally free from annoyance within. Scarcely, however, had I dipped my pen into the ink, when, without warning, the door was thrown open and one of the servants, armed with a broom, a feather brush, and a dust-pan, entered, and, after regarding me for a few moments in an inquisitorial manner, asked me how long it would be before I went out. I gave her to understand that it would be twenty-four hours, at least. She replied that she could not wait that length of time, and would, therefore, proceed to sweep the room.

"Young woman," I said, "you will oblige me by going away and taking your implements of house-cleaning with you."

"Sure," she replied, "the mistress tould me to come here and sweep, and I must just be doing it."

"Well, never mind," I answered, "about it this morning; some other day will do just as well."

"But the mistress will be sore vexed with me if I don't," she replied.

"Well, no matter," I answered; "I'll explain it to her. Now go."

"But" — she commenced.

"Go!" I exclaimed, interrupting her, and rising from my chair as I spoke.

She retreated precipitately, slamming the door behind her as she disappeared. I stepped to the door, turned the key in the lock, and returned to my desk. "Now, then," I said to myself, "I think that matter is satisfactorily settled. How curious it is," I continued, "that all womenfolks take such pleasure in sweeping. Now, if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is a broom. Brooms were invented by the evil one to try the patience of mankind." Then I returned to my writing.

Before five minutes elapsed, a knock at the door disturbed me.

"Who is there?" I asked.

"Meself it is," said the original Biddy.

"What do you want?" I inquired.

"The mistress bids me come back and sweep the room."

"It can't be done," I replied. "Go away."

"Will ye let me in, sir?" she asked.

"No," I answered.

"Then I 'll tell the mistress," she said.

For a few minutes I enjoyed comparative quiet; only, my little boy, taking advantage of the maid having left the dust-pan by my door, converted it temporarily into a drum, using the handle of the feather duster as a drumstick, and, getting astride the broom, was riding up and down the hall. Going to the door, I told him he might take them all into the yard and play with them there. Then I resumed my writing, congratulating myself upon having disposed of the servant, the boy, and the sweeping-utensils. I had written six lines, perhaps, when a gentle tapping at my door disturbed me. I knew it was my wife, so I opened it and admitted her. She walked in with rather a majestic air, and took a seat on the lounge, without speaking.

"Well, my dear," I said, "what is it?"

"That is exactly what I came here to have answered," she replied.

"Then you 'll have to inquire of Barnum," I said, "for I can't tell."

"Oh, it 's no joking matter, sir, I can assure you," she continued. "How do you suppose that I can keep my house in cleanliness and order, if the servants are not allowed to sweep and dust when I tell them to?"

"I 'm sure I don't know," I replied; "but, then, I don't see the necessity of one's coming in here while I am writing, and raising such a dust as she necessarily must. Why she can't sweep some other room just as well as this, I confess, puzzles me. The fact is, this room does n't require sweeping. It is n't more than two or three weeks ago since I saw some one sweeping it."

"Two or three weeks!" echoed my wife; "if it had not been swept since then, I think you would find a cart-load of dirt in it. It was thoroughly swept on Wednesday, and now Friday is my regular day for sweeping and cleaning throughout the house. So, if you will just let the servant come in here and sweep, I will be much obliged to you."

"But, actually, I don't think the room requires it," I said; "besides, it being a rainy day, I had decided to remain at home and write. It will be very annoying for me to stop at this moment; and, indeed, I won't do it." And I resolutely took up my pen and resumed writing.

My wife answered not a word, but sat silent for at least five minutes. I did not once look up from my paper, although I knew that her eyes were upon me, and that she was regarding me attentively. It is very trying to a sensitive man like myself, to be made the target of a woman's eyes for many minutes at a time. At last, throwing down my pen, I exclaimed, —

"If there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to be looked at!"

"Very likely," said my wife; "but you brought it upon yourself."

"Well, I won't bear it any longer," I replied; "and I

wish you would go away and leave me to my writing. This is my room, and I don't want it swept. It seems to me as if sweeping was done for no other purpose than to raise a dust, — so that one can go about with a feather brush and a dusting-cloth, and scatter the dust which has settled on the furniture over the floor again. What possible good is accomplished thereby, I don't see."

"The obtuseness of some persons," she answered, maliciously, "often prevents their seeing good in anything."

"Indeed!" was all I vouchsafed in reply.

At this moment Biddy made her appearance, complaining that some one had carried off her broom and dust-pan, and she could not find them. My wife regarded me attentively.

"If any one," she said, "has had the audacity to hide them, I shall never forget it as long as I live!"

I made no reply.

"It is very singular," she continued, "what has become of them."

I looked out of the window, and asked my wife what the noise was that came up from the yard.

"Well, if that is n't too bad," she said; "there is that dear little boy out in the rain without any cap on, and with the dust-pan and broom. What a careless girl you are to have left them lying where the little fellow could get them. Go, quickly, and bring in the child. After all, it is your fault," she added, turning to me; "if you had allowed Bridget to attend to her sweeping here, as usual, this would not have happened. Now, he has probably taken a terrible cold, and will have the croup and die, for aught I know."

Here the lad made his appearance, struggling in Bridget's arms. He was thoroughly wet, and had apparently been thrown from his horse, for he was covered with mud from head to feet.

"Look at him!" exclaimed my wife; "can he ever be got clean?"

"He is in a pickle," I said.

"Pa said I might go out, and take the broom too," said young hopeful.

I frowned at the rascal.

"Is that true?" my wife asked.

"Certainly it is," I said. "And now just see," I continued, "how wrong it was in you to send Bridget to sweep my room, when you knew I was engaged in writing. It will be all owing to your ill management of household affairs if that boy be sick and die. And if this should be the sad result, how you ever can forgive yourself, I do not know."

"But, my dear," she said, looking imploringly into my face, "I did n't send him into the yard."

"I can't help that," I replied; "the fault is yours just the same. It all comes from your confounded mania for sweeping and dusting. I wish to gracious there was no such thing as a broom in the world."

"But," interposed my wife, "do you really think the darling will be sick and die?" and she clasped the lad, muddied though he was, within her arms.

"I cannot tell," I replied, "how five minutes' exposure to a warm spring rain may affect him; but, at all events," I added, smiling at her terror, "the fault will rest at your door."

"Ah! I see how it is," said my wife, her confidence somewhat restored; "it is the old story enacted in the garden of Eden by our first parents, — the man putting the blame upon the woman."

"My dear," I said, "as it has ceased raining, I think I will take a walk, and while I am absent, you can let Bridget sweep and dust my room; but," I added, as I took up my hat and coat, "if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is a Friday's cleaning."

FIFTH INFELICITY.

DOMESTIC GOVERNMENT.

"WHY you don't keep those children," I said to my wife, "from making such an abominable noise while I am in the house, I can't imagine. I should think that you'd instruct them to be quiet and behave themselves when I am at home. They have all the day, from nine o'clock until five, in which to play and make as much noise as they please, and why you will allow them to keep it up until bedtime, I really don't understand. After I've been employed down-town for six or eight hours, toiling for you and the children, I desire, when I return home, to enjoy rest and quiet, and not find myself, the moment I enter the house, in the midst of bedlam."

"The noise they make," said my wife, looking up from her work, "can be no more annoying to you than it is to me, who have to be subjected to it all day. I'm sure my nerves ought to be made of iron to enable me to endure it. You, in reality, experience little of its unpleasantness; but here am I, shut up, day after day, with these noisy beings, obliged oftentimes, through lack of strength to correct them, to submit to their caprices and naughtiness, while you are abroad in the open air, and free from the petty annoyances which surround me. You men, though, think a woman's life is a perfect paradise. I wish you had to live only one such day as this has been. I have been obliged to have the sole care of the children ever since morning, and, between their crying and boisterous behavior, they have nearly worn me out. My head aches violently, and it does n't seem as if my fingers could take another stitch."

"But why," I asked, "did you take so much upon yourself? Why did n't you let Katy have charge of the children, as usual?"

"Because this is ironing-day, and Katy always has to assist the laundress."

"But what is the use," I inquired, "of having Katy to take care of the children, unless she does it? If the laundress cannot perform her work herself, why you 'd better get some one who can, so that Katy can attend to her own business. Now, if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is your mismanagement with the servants. Each one should have her own duties to perform, and not interfere with, or assist in, those of another. I should just like to have the control of this household for a week, when I think I could effect a revolution in it of a most satisfactory character."

"I am sure," said my wife, "I have no objection to your taking the entire charge of the house for a year or longer. A pretty housekeeper, though, you 'd make. I think you would find it a more difficult task, however, than you imagine."

"All that is necessary to insure a well-regulated household, my dear," I said, "is a proper system. System is the basis of all governments — domestic and national. Without it, disorders are certain to prevail. I have a theory about government, which, if you will listen to me, I 'll explain to you. In the first place"—

"I don't know," said my wife, interrupting me, "that I have time at present to hear your theory, even if the little ones would remain quiet long enough to allow me to give you the attention necessary."

"Children, cease your noise!" I exclaimed. But they gave no heed to my command, and raised such a hubbub that it called forth from me an expression which only the extreme circumstances of the case warranted.

"Don't speak so," said my wife, soothingly. "I have

been obliged to endure much more than this all day, and have not once lost my temper."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, "what confounded muss have I sat down in! Some sticky stuff. I declare it's molasses. If there be one thing I dislike to sit in more than another, it is molasses. Why do you allow the children to have it?"

"I don't know where they got it from, I am sure," answered my wife, "for I was not aware there was a drop in the house. Knowing how averse you are to having the little ones use it, since they stick themselves up with it so, I have denied it to them for months past."

"Well, it appears they have got some, at all events, and — Look at that child! daubed from head to foot."

Here the slim girl of thirteen made her appearance with a plate containing sticks of molasses candy, which, she said, she had made for papa. Now, if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is molasses candy made for papa; but on the present occasion I took the plate, with its entire contents, determined that it at least should not be distributed over the floor, chairs, and table.

"Every piece of furniture in the room," I said, "is sticky with this confounded stuff. Every door-knob and window-pane is marked with it, and every part of the house, for a week to come, will be redolent of it. The fact is, my dear, you allow the children to do just as they please, and when it is n't molasses they get into, it is honey or sweetmeats. What is the use of being a mother, unless you can manage your children, and keep them out of the molasses jug?"

My wife said she did n't see any use in it, which seemed to me rather an equivocal answer. While I was pondering over this reply, my eyes fell upon the candy before me. It seemed to be filled with raisins. I examined it carefully, and the raisins resolved themselves into flies.

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, "what could have induced that child to put flies into the candy?"

"Flies!" echoed my wife.

"Yes," I repeated, "flies!"

My wife looked at the candy with a critical eye. Then she rung the bell for Biddy, who soon made her appearance.

"Where did the children get the molasses for their candy?" she inquired.

"Out of the jug, to be sure," said Biddy; "where else should they? Did n't they find it in the cellar, where it had been ever so long, doing no good to any one, and so I just said they might have it for candy."

"But the jug ought not to have been in the cellar, Biddy; that is not its proper place," said my wife.

"Oh, it 's not the jug we use, ma'am," responded Biddy; "and now I 'll tell you all about it. When Nora, the cook we had last summer, you remember, was here, she just accidentally, one day, broke the handle off the jug, and so that it would n't be in your sight, ma'am, she put it on the upper shelf in the cellar, where we forgot all about it. I suppose, somehow, the cork got out and the flies got in, but it was very nice molasses, ma'am, for all that. And I told Miss Lily, when she boiled the molasses, to be sure and skim off the top of it, for I thought there might be a fly or two in it, and I knew flies liked molasses; and that 's just the blessed truth, ma'am, — indeed it is!"

When Biddy had left the room, I said to my wife, —

"This is another example, my dear, of your housekeeping qualifications. You not only let the children do as they please, but you allow the servants the same liberty. If they break a jug, why you know nothing about it until months afterward, when the children poison themselves with eating flies."

"Poison themselves!" exclaimed my wife; "you don't mean to say that flies are poisonous?"

"Well," I replied, "I don't regard them as wholesome food. And I advise you, if you have any regard for the children's health, to collect the balance of the candy, scattered around, and throw it away."

This opportunity of disposing of the candy, which otherwise would be sticking everything up for a week to come, was appreciated by me, and the few flies I discovered were almost worth their weight in diamonds.

"Now, my dear," I said, after my wife, having given her orders in regard to the destruction of the candy, reseated herself near me, "I will state my theory in regard to domestic government. In the first place, you must adopt, as a fundamental precept, that which Solomon taught" —

"My dear," said my wife, "I am sorry to interrupt you, but I must leave you and attend to getting dinner."

After saying this, my wife abruptly left the room. My theory, which, however, is a good one, I shall insist on her listening to some day or other.

SIXTH INFELICITY.

GOING OUT TO DINE.

"YOU need not wait dinner for me to-day," I said to my wife, while I lingered over my second cup of coffee at the breakfast-table, "as I expect to dine at the Brevoort House with a friend."

"There it is again," replied the estimable woman; "you are always dining out, and enjoying yourself, while I am compelled to stay at home and eat with the children. I can't remember the time when I have been asked out to dine. I wish to gracious somebody — I don't know who — would invite me to dinner. You have often promised me that I should dine at the Brevoort House with you, but you have never taken me there."

"Simply, my dear," I answered, "because it has never been convenient. Some day or other, when you are down-town, and wish to go to a place of amusement in the evening, instead of going all the way home to dinner," (for we live near the Central Park,) "we will have a cosy little meal at the Brevoort."

"You have said that so many times, I scarcely think it worth while to place any confidence in it again," my wife said, submissively. "But who are you going to dine with to-day?"

"With a few artist friends."

"Well, I hope you will have a nice time," said my wife; "but just think of me at home, surrounded by noisy children, while you are feasting with your friends."

"I will, indeed," I replied; "and more than that, we will drink your health in a bumper of champagne."

"I don't think your doing so," she answered, "will improve my health in the least. The fact is, I look upon your dining out about once a week, as you do, as an imposition on me. And I am a very foolish woman to submit to it."

"You would certainly be a much more foolish woman," I said, "if you failed to submit to it with a good grace. Dining out occasionally, my dear, with my bachelor friends, is about the only event in my married life which serves to recall the days when I lived a roving, careless existence, and was free from the trammels and annoyances of matrimony."

"If you feel trammelled," responded my wife, "what do you think of me, who am chained, day after day, and week after week, to the house, with such unyielding links as these children."

"It is your own fault," I said, "that you do not go out more."

"But what would become of the children if I went abroad, making calls, and shopping in Broadway, as some ladies, whom I know, do?" asked my wife.

"Oh, never mind the children; let them go; they will do well enough," I replied. "You need not forever be attending to them, — they are old enough to take care of themselves; besides, Katy is here to watch them."

"Now, I think it is too bad for you to talk as you do; you give me no credit for staying at home and seeing to the children. I presume you would notice a difference in their appearance and behavior if it were not for me. Whose hands but mine, I should like to know, sew the buttons on, and repair the rents in that boy's jackets? Who sees that his face and hands are kept clean but me?"

"Why, Katy, of course," I responded.

"Of course, it is n't Katy," she replied; "if it were left to her, the boy would seldom be clean. No, indeed, it is I who have to say a dozen times a day, 'Katy, those children require washing;' or, 'Katy, see what mischief those little

ones are in now, for they are so quiet I know they must be doing something wrong.' That is just the way I have it every day, and I do think it is too bad. My life is actually wearing out in attending to those children, and all the sympathy and satisfaction I get from you, when I speak of my cares, is, 'Never mind; let them go.'"

"Well, if you will persist, my dear," I replied, "in staying at home and making a servant of yourself, I don't know what I can do to relieve you. Now, I have an idea about children, which is, that the more you do for them the more they expect you to do. Never argue with a child or a woman. Whip the one and leave the other."

"Which would you whip, my dear," asked my wife, sarcastically, "the child or the woman?"

I deigned no answer to this, but continued, —

"When two children are playing, and one gets hurt, or are quarrelling, and one makes the other cry, whip them both, and, my word for it, they will not often hurt each other, or quarrel. In my little theory relating to domestic government, this rule plays an important part, and if you would only adopt it, you would find time in which to go out more, and also have less troublesome children around you."

"They must have a different father, then, my dear," my wife said, maliciously, "than you; for these children all came honestly by their irritable and mischievous dispositions."

"Now you want to vex me," I said, "by pretending to misunderstand me, and putting a false construction upon my words. If there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is equivocation."

"Well, never mind about it now," said my wife, anxious to change the subject of our conversation. "What time do you suppose you will come home this evening?"

"Oh, after dinner," I replied.

"Of course; but how long after?"

"Why — I can't tell exactly."

"Will it be by nine o'clock?"

"Well — yes; I think so."

"Now, I know better, my dear," she said. "I see plainly, by your manner of answering me, that you have no intention of coming home before eleven or twelve o'clock. I am certain it is your purpose, after dinner, to go to a place of amusement. I should think it would be enough for you to dine away from your wife, and not leave her alone, with only her sad thoughts, all the evening. You men don't consider that we poor wives find no enjoyment in sitting up till midnight waiting for truant husbands, who have been feasting at dinner-parties, to come home, when oftentimes we are wearied and careworn with the day's household duties. No, you partake of the six or eight dinner-courses provided, to say nothing of the costly wines, and then either while away the evening smoking and telling stories, or go to the theatre or opera."

"But, my dear," I said, unable to endure this tirade any longer, "I tell you positively I shall be home by nine o'clock."

"Why remain out so late even as that? Why not be home by seven?"

"For the very good reason that as the dinner hour named is six o'clock, I shall scarcely be through with my plate of fish when seven comes."

"Oh, I see how it is," my wife said; "you are determined to leave me alone all the evening. If, when you come home, you find cousin Harry here, turning the sheets of music for me while I sing, you need not be surprised."

"And if you should hear, my dear," I said, "that I went to the opera this evening with Musidora, you need not be surprised."

"I sincerely trust," said my wife, mischievously, "that you will be able to escort Musidora after dinner."

"Now, then," I exclaimed, "this is too bad. You do all you can to provoke me. The idea of a wife insinuating

that her husband is n't as capable after dinner as before of taking care of himself, is what I don't wish to submit to. It 's preposterous! It 's naughty!" I exclaimed, assuming an indignation I did not really feel.

"But, my dear," said my wife, submissively, tears filling her eyes, "I was only joking, you know. Of course I did n't mean it."

"You should not joke, though," I said, smiling at the feeling she manifested, "on such a subject; besides, if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is a joke of this character."

Then, rising from the table, I went to her, wiped the tears from her cheeks, kissed her, and whispered that I certainly would be home at nine o'clock. And I fulfilled my promise.

SEVENTH INFELICITY.

MY WIFE WANTS MONEY.

"I HAD almost forgotten to ask you," my wife said, in her most amiable tone, as I drew on my gloves preparatory to going down-town, "for some money."

"Almost!" I exclaimed; "it would be very difficult to make me believe that, for I have seen 'money' in your eyes, and on the tip of your tongue, for the last hour. But why you did n't ask for it before I put on my gloves, I can't imagine. If there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to be asked for money after I get on my gloves."

"Then why, if you saw so clearly that I wanted some, did you not offer it to me?" asked my wife. "The truth is, I dislike very much to ask you for money, and I often go without any rather than speak a word to you on the subject."

"Why did n't you do so to-day?" I inquired.

"Because to-day," she replied, "it is very necessary for me to have some. Not only have I the gas-bill to pay, — which is larger than it was even in December, — but I have to purchase some spring dresses for the children."

"Oh, never mind the children's dresses," I answered; "let them go. But what makes the gas-bill so high this month?"

"I am certain I do not know," my wife replied; "though, to be sure, we have had considerable company lately, and you have been up late at night writing."

"Pshaw!" I exclaimed, "that won't account for it. I

believe the servants burn it all night; and if they do, it is your fault."

"I do not think, my dear, that the servants are at all wasteful of it."

"Then there is something the matter with the confounded meter," I said. "Can't the children get at it, and set the register ahead in some way?"

My wife laughed.

"Oh, you need n't laugh," I continued; "it's a probable thing, as they are given to all kinds of mischief. I 'll tell you what I will do. I'll go directly down to the company's office, and enter a complaint about the meter." And I put on my hat resolutely, and opened the door to depart.

"But you are not going without leaving me some money, I hope," she said.

"There it is again!" I exclaimed; "money! money! it is always money with you women. Well, how much do you want? Come, don't keep me standing here forever, when you know I am in a hurry."

"Can you spare me twenty dollars?" she asked.

"No!" I answered.

"Fifteen, then?" she suggested.

"Scarcely," I replied; "but there are twelve; and, now, don't ask me for money again in a week."

"But what shall I do about the children's spring clothing?" she inquired; "after paying the gas-bill, I shall not have any great amount left."

"I don't know, nor I don't care what you 'll do," I replied. "The fact is, the children are well enough dressed. I don't approve of arraying them in velvets and laces."

"Fifteen or twenty dollars," she answered, smiling, "would scarcely be sufficient for the purchase of any quantity of velvets and laces. No! all that I want is to have the children appear clean and respectable. I can't abide to see them in soiled and faded clothes."

"But they look well enough to me," I said. "I don't

see why their present clothes are not good enough for them to play around in, as they do; nor why it 's necessary to buy them anything new."

"If you had to attend to the mending of their clothes, as I do, you would n't ask me why I wanted to get them new ones."

"Well, well," I said, "here are ten dollars more; but don't, for goodness' sake, ask me for money again until" —

"Until," interrupted my wife, smiling, "I want a new bonnet — which will be next week."

"My dear," I said, impressively, "don't speak to me of bonnets. If there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to hear about a new bonnet."

"But I am very economical as regards bonnets, you know, my dear," she said. "I only have four a year, whereas most ladies have a dozen."

"A dozen!" I exclaimed, astonished; "why that is equal to one a month. It is preposterous. Does your milliner have many such customers?"

"Oh, yes; Miss Modiste assures me that there are some of her purchasers who get a new bonnet every month."

"I am very thankful, my dear," I said, "that you are not one; but, it appears to me, that four hats a year are more than you can afford to have, especially in such hard times as these are, when every one should study economy. Don't you think you can get along with two a year?"

"I really don't see how it would be possible," she replied; "because every three months the fashions change, and I would n't, you know, like to be out of the fashion."

"Well, the fact is, my dear," I replied, "that we must economize somewhere; and I think we can best dispense with new bonnets. As for being in the fashion, it is all nonsense. If there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is seeing you forever studying a fashion-plate."

"I am not forever studying a fashion-plate," my wife answered, with spirit; "it is rarely, indeed, that I see one.

If you want to economize, why don't you stop smoking, and leave off drinking wine? You men are always accusing us of being extravagant, and spending our time before the mirror; but in my opinion, and in that of all the thinking portion of my sex, too, we are seldom as extravagant or as vain as your sex. You 'll spend almost as much for one dinner, down-town, as would suffice to feed your whole family well for a week. As for vanity, I have never seen the greatest of coquettes stand longer before a mirror than I have you when engaged in tying an elaborate knot in your cravat."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, "what an inventive faculty you possess! It is a wonder to me you have never essayed to write a romance. In the first place, I don't wear a cravat, — it is simply a scarf; and in the next place, I don't tie it, but fasten it with a gold pin."

"Well, then, all I can say is," said my wife, "that you spend an unnecessary amount of time before the glass in pinning your scarf."

"You certainly would provoke the best man living!" I exclaimed; "and just now, when I have given you twenty-five dollars to buy knickknacks with, I should n't think you 'd want to vex me."

"You only gave me twenty-two dollars, any way," the excellent woman answered, "and part of that is to pay the gas-bill, and with the rest I must purchase clothing for the little ones. I am sure I don't know what you mean by 'knickknacks.'"

"I am sure I 'm not particular whether you do or not," replied; "I 've said it, and I 'll hold to it — knickknacks — now, then."

"I 'll take five dollars more before you go, my dear," my wife said, yielding no attention to my last remark. "I had almost forgotten that I had promised to pay the milkman his bill to-day."

"There it is again," I exclaimed; "money! money! This

is the third time I have been obliged this morning to take off my gloves so as to give you money. If I remain here much longer I shall not have change enough left to ride down-town with. Here are five dollars; take them, and don't ask for any more. Good-bye! my dear."

"Good-bye!" she replied. "Oh, dearest," calling me back, "I wish you would stop at Miss Modiste's, select a handsome bonnet for me, pay for it, and have her send it up."

"Perhaps so," I answered.

"Now, do," she said, coaxingly; "and, dearest, come home early, for I shall have a nice dinner for you. Don't forget the bonnet for me, though," she added, as I went out of the door.

"What a woman!" I said to myself, as I stood at the corner of the street, waiting for an omnibus to come by; "not contented with robbing me of all my money, she wants me to get her a bonnet. If I select one, it won't suit her; — but I 'll do it, although if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to choose a bonnet for my wife."

EIGHTH INFELICITY.

AFTER MIDNIGHT.

"DO you hear that child cough, my dear?" I asked the mother of my children, as I raised myself on one elbow in bed, and listened.

"No," she said, awaking from her sleep, "I do not."

"Then you must be deaf," I cried. "Hark!"

The interesting woman lifted her head from the pillow, untied the strings of her *bonnet de nuit*, brushed back a lock of hair from her right ear, and listened attentively.

"There," I said, as a harsh, discordant sound broke the silence, "do you hear it now?"

"I hear a singular noise," she replied, "but it is not a cough."

"Then I should like to know what it is," I exclaimed.

"I am sure I cannot tell," she replied; "but it is n't a cough, that is very certain."

"I 'm not so certain, however," I said.

"I can't help it," she answered; "I am a mother, and am presumed to know the sound of a child's cough when I hear one."

"Well," I said, "I am a father, I suppose, and I don't see why I can't tell a cough when I hear it. Listen!"

"My dear," and my wife grasped my arm nervously, as she spoke, "it proceeds from some one trying to get into the house. That noise comes from a file!"

"Nonsense!" I replied; "burglars would n't think of breaking in here."

"Hark!" she cried; "I hear some one on the stairs."

We both sat up in bed, with our eyes fixed upon the

door. Again were heard the hard, harsh notes that first aroused me. There was no mistaking the sound this time, and my wife said, —

"It is the little boy; he was out too much to-day, and though I tried hard to do so, I could n't keep him in."

The door opened at this moment, and Katy entered.

"Oh, ma'am, the little boy coughs so, and I don't know what to give him. I think he has the croup, ma'am."

"Go back to the nursery immediately," my wife said, "and I will be there in a minute."

My wife rose, went to the closet, selected the proper remedies, and opened the door to depart.

"Well," she asked, turning to me, "are you not going with me?"

"What good can I do?" I replied. "I don't see why I should get up in the middle of the night, and go trotting around the house because you do. If I could be of any possible service, I would go, of course."

"Well, it would only look fatherly in you to do it," she answered. "Will you go?"

"My dear," I said, "if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to get up in the middle of the night. I'll go if it be necessary; but don't you wait for me, for it will take me some time to dress, and the little fellow needs you there at once."

My wife departed.

I laid down, deciding to remain where I was, rather than go where I knew I should be in the way. Ten minutes passed, during which time the little boy coughed occasionally, but each time it was looser and more natural. Then, satisfied that he was improving under his mother's treatment, I resolved to go to sleep. Scarcely were my eyes closed, when Katy tapped at the door.

"Come in," I cried.

"The mistress would like to have you come to the nursery to see the little boy."

"How is he?" I asked. "Is he awake or asleep?"

"Oh, he is just sleeping nicely, and he looks so purty, the mistress thought you 'd like to see him."

"Not to-night, Katy. Tell your mistress I 'll see him in the morning."

Then I turned over and closed my eyes again. I had gone a little distance into the land of Nod, when my wife touched me on the shoulder.

"You are a humane, affectionate father, are n't you?" she said, regarding me with a severe look.

"I don't know anything to the contrary," I replied. "Do you?"

"Yes, I do," she answered. "And I must say I think your conduct to-night was atrocious. Not only did you let me go alone to the nursery, but when I sent for you to come and see the little boy, who, for aught you knew, was dying, you refused. You men are just as cruel and hard-hearted as you can be. We women must get up in the night and attend to the children if they be sick, while you sleep as soundly as if there were no cares in the world."

"But, my dear," I answered, "I was very weary, and wanted to sleep."

"So did I," she replied; "but no, I had to keep awake. If I had n't, I don't know where that dear little boy would have been by this time. It is n't owing to you that he is now alive."

"Well, I should just like to know," I said, maliciously, 'to whom it is owing, if not to me?"

"Well, I will tell you," said my wife; "it is to me and" —

"Who?" I asked, raising myself on one elbow, and regarding her closely, as she paused a moment before uttering the final name.

"Katy, to be sure," she continued. "Were n't we obliged, I should like to know, to soak the little fellow's feet, and rub sweet oil upon his chest, and put flannels,

dipped into hot vinegar and pepper, around his throat, and coax him to take medicine?"

"Oh!" I exclaimed, as I sunk down among the pillows, "I thought" —

"Never mind what you thought," my wife interposed. "The truth is, you only think of your own ease and comfort, and never care whether I enjoy myself or not."

"My dear," I said, "you must excuse me, but I wish to go to sleep. I will hear the remainder of what you have to say in the morning; because if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to listen to a curtain-lecture at night."

"For a married man of your experience," she said, "it seems to me you are vastly particular. Now it appears to me that if I wished to lecture you — which, thank fortune, I do not — that the present time would be the most appropriate, and also the least liable to interruption. You cannot say, though, that I have ever condescended to lecture you. I trust I have more respect for my husband than to utter a word to him which would have the effect of lowering him in my own estimation. I do think, however, that you sometimes deserve a reprimand, although you do not get it."

"Will you oblige me, my love," I said, tenderly, "by going to sleep?"

"Certainly," she answered.

There was a silence for three minutes and a half. I sunk into a dose. My wife startled me by exclaiming, —

"I do think you treat me too badly. I am not allowed to express an opinion of my own, and when I try to speak you endeavor to stop me by telling me to go to sleep. It was not so once. I have seen the time when you were only too glad to listen to whatever I had to say, and would willingly sit up all night, to hear me talk, if I would only let you. I don't understand why you men change so after marriage. I'm certain I have not altered in the least.

What I was, in disposition and feelings, when a girl, I am now; but no one would recognize you for the amiable, smooth-spoken young man of — how many years ago were we married?"

"I am sure I don't know, and, what is more, I don't care," I replied. "Now will you be quiet, and let me go to sleep or not?"

"Oh, yes, go to sleep if you want to," she answered; and another brief silence ensued, broken by my wife sobbingly exclaiming, —

"Only fifteen years next June since we were married, and to hear you say now that you don't know nor care when it took place, is perfectly horrible, and something I never expected to hear from your lips."

"Well, now that you have heard it," I exclaimed, "I trust you will be able to go to sleep, for I tell you positively that if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to hear you talk after midnight."

Having uttered this, I drew the bedclothes closer about me, shut my eyes firmly, and went to sleep — almost.

"Husband!" somebody said close by me.

"Well, wife, what is it?" I inquired.

"I did n't mean everything I said to you to-night," she continued.

"Nor I," I added, "everything I said to you. Good night!"

"Are you sleepy?" she inquired.

"Yes; good night!" I replied.

"Good night!" she answered.

NINTH INFELICITY.

HOUSE-CLEANING.

"WHAT a confounded state of disorder this house is in," I said to my wife, on coming home from business the other afternoon; "if I did n't know better, I should think we were going to move. Pray, tell me what are you about?"

"I am about to clean house, my dear," my wife replied.

"You look as if you were about to become an inmate of an insane asylum," I answered; for my wife was shockingly attired in a dressing-gown that had seen better days and many house-cleanings. She carried a long-handled feather duster in her hand, and had a cap on her head.

"Oh, you may sneer at me as much as you please," she said; "but I presume you would find a difference in the appearance of the house if it were not that I superintended the cleanings."

"What possible good is accomplished," I asked, "by turning the house upside down in this manner? For my part, I never could see that you improve its appearance in the least by doing so; it is simply a confounded bore, and I have come to the opinion that if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is house-cleaning."

"One thing is very certain," she replied, "which is, that you men know nothing about it. Look at that cobweb in the corner there!"

And my wife made an attack with the long-handled feather duster upon an inoffensive little cobweb, that I thought rather ornamental than otherwise.

"Now, don't you think," I said, "that if you were to

clean one room at a time, that it would be a great deal better than throwing the entire house into confusion at once? Devote one week, for instance, to the cleaning of the parlors, another to the dining-room, and so on. That is my plan."

"At that rate, house-cleaning would last through an entire year, and I, for one, am not disposed to adopt your plan. No, I want to put it all into as small a space as possible, and get through with it as speedily as I can. If I were to follow your suggestion, the dust and dirt raised in cleaning one room would be sure to settle, or in some way get into another room just put to rights, and the result would be that house-cleaning would never end. No; everything must be done at once."

"Well, my dear," I said, "I 'll not attempt to argue the matter with you, for I know it would be a very useless task; but I must say that my mother, who understood these things, used to"—

"Of course," my wife interrupted, "your mother did very differently from what I do. She was differently situated, and could do as she pleased. A widow, left as your mother was, could have her own way in a great many matters which we poor wives cannot follow. I know your mother was a very remarkable woman; but I trust that I do my duty to you and my children and my house, as well as I know how. I don't," continued my wife, putting the end of the handle of the feather duster into the corner of her eye, and brushing out an imaginary tear, "think it fair, or honorable, or generous, or husbandlike in you to be always telling me how much better your mother kept house than I do. I wish to gracious you had married your mother."

"Pooh! pooh!" I exclaimed; "you know that would n't have been proper. I might have married your mother, though, which would have been as near as I could come to gratifying your wish."

My wife smiled.

"My mother would n't have had you, sir," she said.

"She would not have shown as good taste, then, as her daughter did," I replied.

"Her daughter sometimes regrets the 'good taste' she showed," my wife said, mischievously.

"I think you are mistaken, my dear," I answered; "but I am ready to waive the question, provided you will tell me when dinner will be ready. It is six o'clock, and as yet I see no signs of it."

"I thought I told you, before you went away this morning," my wife made answer, "that you would have to get your dinner down-town, for that we should have none."

"You did say so," I replied; "but I supposed it was simply a hint for me to send home something from the market, which I did."

"I know you did — enough to feed the aldermen and their assistants with. How did you think it could be cooked when we were cleaning house?"

"I did n't know you were going to clean house," I said. "I wish to gracious I had; I would n't have come home till midnight."

"Yes, and left your poor wife here in the dust and disorder, while you were feasting and enjoying yourself. I am glad, now, you have not been to dinner, for you can see what I have to put up with! — how I have to get along, and how uncomfortable, even to me, house-cleaning is."

"I presume it is, my dear," I said, in a mollified tone of voice, for I was desirous of having my dinner, and did not care to provoke my wife; "and I am very sorry that you deem it necessary to engage in it. Why don't you sit down quietly, and let the servants do the work. I don't think it necessary for you to lift a finger to it."

"Nicely the house would be cleaned, indeed," she replied, "if I did not. You men know nothing about it, and I just wish you would n't speak another word on the subject."

"Very well, let me have some dinner," I replied, "to

put into my mouth, and I will not. If there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is going without my dinner."

"I am sure I don't know," said my wife, "what you will have to eat, for it is utterly impossible for me, or either of the servants, to stop work at present to cook anything."

"Oh, anything will answer," I said; "a piece of cold meat-pie, or a slice of boiled ham, for instance. That, together with an apple-tart and a glass of wine, I think, will suffice. Let one of the servants set the table in the library, and then send the things up, if you please."

My wife laughed.

"If you think," she said, "that we have any meat-pie or boiled ham in the house, you are greatly mistaken."

"Why, we had some yesterday," I answered. "Where has it gone to?"

"Gone to?" echoed my wife. "Don't you suppose the children and servants must eat?"

"Why, yes, certainly," I answered; "but" —

"But what?" interrupted my wife. "You don't think a meat-pie will last forever, I trust?"

"No," I answered; "but my mother, at house-cleaning time, always had a meat-pie and boiled ham in the cupboard."

"There it is again," exclaimed my wife; "you are always comparing my housekeeping with your mother's, and I don't like it. I endeavor to do the best I can, and if I fail to have a meat-pie and a boiled ham in the house whenever you ask for them, I am certain to have your mother's ways cast into my face. I don't do things as your mother did, I know, and, what is more, I don't intend to. If you are not satisfied with my manner of keeping house, why, you had better hire a housekeeper who will suit you better. I never heard my father — and he was a most fastidious man — complain of my mother's housekeeping, and she taught me. Everybody who knew my mother always

said that she was the neatest and most perfect of housekeepers."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed; "don't say anything more to me about your mother, for if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to hear about her housekeeping. But all this time, while you are talking about the excellent housekeeping qualities of your mother and yourself, I am starving. Now, once for all, can I have my dinner or not?"

"Certainly," answered my wife; "just so soon as I am able to get it for you."

"When will that be?" I asked.

"In about an hour," she replied.

"I can't wait so long," I said. "I have an engagement to meet a gentleman, on particular business, at eight o'clock, and here it is seven. I see that I'll have to go out and get my dinner elsewhere; there is no help for it. I'll have a good one, at all events," I added, as I drew on my gloves.

"Yes, you had better go," said my wife, "and leave me here to eat dry bread, while you spend two or three dollars on a dinner. My father never left my mother, when in this way."

"What do you mean," I inquired, slightly startled, "by 'in this way'?"

"Why, in the midst of house-cleaning, of course," she replied; "what other way could I mean?"

"Oh!" I said, much relieved by her explanation, "I thought, perhaps, that you meant"—

"Sir," said my wife, indignantly, "you will oblige me, now, by going out and getting your dinner wherever you please, and paying just as much for it as you like. But my father"—

"My dear," I said, interrupting her, "if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to hear about your father. Good-bye!"

I placed my hand on the knob of the door, to open it, when Katy, entering the room, said that dinner was on the table. Immediately I turned to my wife, who had been arranging her hair, and performing other toilet duties, during our confab, and, offering her my arm, which she took, we proceeded to the dining-room.

TENTH INFELICITY.

GOING TO CHURCH.

"DON'T you think, my dear," I said to my wife, on Sunday morning, as we sat together in the library, "that you had better prepare for church, instead of passing the time in reading?"

"Yes," she replied, "as soon as I have finished this chapter."

"What are you reading?" I inquired.

"The 'Life of Bishop Doane,'" answered my wife.

"A very excellent work," I said; "but if the chapter is much longer, you'll be likely to do that which the good bishop never did."

"What is that?" asked my wife, in some surprise.

"Why, go late to church," I answered.

"Well, I have finished now," she said, closing the volume, "and it won't take me ten minutes to get ready."

As my wife departed, I looked at my watch. It was five minutes after ten; if she were ready in ten minutes, as she said she would be, we could reach the church just at the right moment. My wife had nothing to do, I thought, but to put on her bonnet and shawl, and I had even less to perform. I turned to my reading. When I looked at my watch again, the ten minutes had elapsed. Then I gave my wife three minutes grace; still she did not come. I opened the door and called to her.

"My dear," I cried, "are you coming to-day or not?"

She thought it highly probable that she would.

"But unless you come very soon," I said, "we shall be

late; and if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is being late at church."

Two minutes more elapsed; then I said, —

"My dear, I'll not wait another moment; I am going."

"Very well," she replied, "I will overtake you; go on."

But I did n't go on. I waited for her. Another minute elapsed.

"Are n't you ever coming?" I asked.

"Yes," was all the answer she vouchsafed.

I could endure it no longer; so I went up-stairs where she was. She had n't even her bonnet and shawl on, but stood before the mirror arranging her hair.

"What in the name of goodness!" I exclaimed, "have you been doing?"

"Why, preparing myself for church," she replied. "You don't think I would go unless I looked as well as any one there; do you?"

"Oh, of course not," I said; "we go to church to show ourselves, and for no other purpose;" and I leaned my elbow on the corner of the toilet-table, as if I would like to argue the matter.

"Be careful," she exclaimed, "or you will knock off that bottle of cologne!"

I changed my position to the opposite side of the table.

"There!" she said, "you have managed to upset the bottle of hair-oil, and have covered your coat-sleeve with powder."

"Confound your flour!" I said; "why can't you leave it in the kitchen where it belongs. Now, who has got my wisp-broom, I 'd like to know?"

"The little boy was sweeping the stairs with it yesterday," my wife said, "and I told him to put it back where it belonged."

"But why did n't you do it yourself?" I asked; "you might have known he would not do it."

"Now there is no use in talking about it," she said;

"but I can't forever be picking up after that boy. Come, if you wish me to get ready for church, you must n't stand before the glass any longer pulling out gray hairs from your whiskers, but let me see how to put on my bonnet."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, "I have no gray hairs; but if I had, I would not use pomatum and hair-dye, as some one whom I know does, to hide them."

"Now, I should just like to know who you mean by 'some one,'" my wife said, "for you are well aware it can't apply to me."

"Perhaps not," I answered; "but come, we shall be late; and if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to enter church after the services have commenced."

"Well, assist me with putting on my shawl, and I shall be ready."

I placed the shawl as gently as possibly on her shoulders.

"Stop!" she exclaimed; "you are crumpling my collar; put the shawl under, not over it. There, that is better; but you men never will learn how to assist a lady in dressing. Come, let us go."

"Suppose you wait," I said, "till I get on my gloves. I don't want to make my toilet in the street."

"Why, I thought you were ready half an hour ago," my wife said. "Then you were not waiting for me, after all!"

"When one has to help his wife put on her shawl, and then has to hunt for something to brush a lot of flour from his coat, he can't very well be putting on his gloves."

"It was n't flour, as you well know, but powder for the complexion."

"Well, I don't care what it is," I said; "but at all events it is a miserable article to have on one's coat. Confound these gloves, — just see how they 're ripped!"

"That is because you are in such haste to get them on. With a little more patience on your part they would not have been torn."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, "how can I have patience when you stand there hurrying me to death?"

"There it is again," she said; "you can't endure for me to say a word to hasten your movements, but I must put up with being talked to, and urged, and actually threatened, if I stop a single minute longer than you think necessary to arrange my hair or dress. You almost hurried the life out of me when you were n't near ready yourself, and now I have to wait for you. I am sure it won't be my fault if we are late to church."

"That we shall be late," I said, "there is no doubt, for it is full half-past ten now."

"Then we shall have plenty of time," my wife said, "for our church does not commence until eleven o'clock."

"Oh!" I exclaimed, much relieved, "I thought it began at half-past ten. Why did n't you tell me this before, and then I would n't have hurried so?"

"Why, I thought you knew it; but never mind," she said; "now we can walk leisurely to church, and not get heated nor tired."

And my wife stepped before the mirror to rearrange the flowers in her bonnet.

"I have n't heard you say yet how you liked my new bonnet," she added. "Don't you think it pretty?"

"Of course it is," I said; "anything I select is pretty."

"But you did not select this," my wife said, smiling.

"What! is n't it the one I sent home from Miss Modiste's?" I asked.

"No, indeed," my wife answered; "that was a frightful bonnet, and I sent it immediately back, and went myself and chose another. This cost six dollars more than the one you selected."

"Well, if you are pleased, my dear, I am," I said; "but don't — now remember — ever again ask me to stop at a milliner's to select a bonnet for you.

"Just think, my dear," I continued, as we walked toward church, "how much good the six dollars additional which you paid for that hat might have done, if it had been given to the church, and used in charitable works."

"It is not likely you would have given it for such a purpose," my wife said, sarcastically; "but it would probably have been spent in a dinner for yourself and a friend downtown. At least, I thought so; and therefore I decided to invest it in a bonnet, rather than have you devour it."

"Perhaps you are right," I said; "but at all events we will say no more about it at present, for we are now at the church-door, which, when we have entered, we should put away from our minds all thoughts connected with the pomps and vanities of this world; especially should we seek to avoid thinking about our outward appearance, but, with humble and contrite hearts, robe our spirits in sackcloth and ashes."

Having thus spoken, we entered the church.

"My dear," I said, as I took off my hat, "how does my hair look? I forgot to brush it before we left the house." My wife nodded, as if to say it looked charmingly.

"My collar?" I asked, as we walked down the aisle; "does it sit well?"

Again my wife nodded. After we had entered our pew:

"My love," I whispered, "it seems to me as if some of that confounded powder is clinging to my coat-sleeve; please brush it off, will you?"

My wife enjoined silence by placing her finger on her lips. Then the clergyman and congregation rose, and the service commenced. I could not but wonder, though, during the prayers and sermon, whether my wife was not thinking about her new bonnet, and if the congregation generally, and the Misses Flamingo, in the next pew back of us, especially, were not admiring the same. Though, for my own part, if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is letting my thoughts wander while in church toward my neighbor's dress.

ELEVENTH INFELICITY.

EARLY IN THE MORNING.

"THERE must be different regulations in this house, my dear," I said, rearranging my pillow, after a vain attempt to gain a short nap, "for I won't endure any longer having the children wake me so early in the morning. If they will get up before daylight, they must remain in the nursery, and not come into our room with their laughter and shouts of 'Good-morning!' The fact is, if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to be aroused from my slumbers with cries of 'Good-morning,' for it is anything but good to be thus disturbed."

"But you must allow, my dear," rejoined my wife, "that it is very pretty in the children to do this. Then that little three year old one, who always adds to her 'good morning' a 'wish you merry Christmas,' — can anything be more childlike and beautiful?"

"Oh, it 's all well enough," I said; "but I don't see the use of it so early in the morning. If she would say it at night, when she goes to bed, I could better appreciate it. It has always been a matter of wonderment to me why children will wake with the birds."

"The reason is very simple," my wife answered; "it is because they go to bed with them. No sooner do you come home in the afternoon, than you begin to tell the children it is time for them to prepare for bed; and, even when you are in the best of humor, you don't seem contented until they are safely ensconced in their cribs. Now, if you were to go to bed at six or seven o'clock,

as they do, I think you would also wake up as early in the morning."

"Perhaps so," I replied; "but what would be the object for me to go to bed so early?"

"Why, as you tell the children," my wife said, maliciously "to make you grow."

Now, I am rather short; but I think my age warrants me in presuming I shall never be any taller, so that when my wife answered as she did, it provoked me. Although not a perfect angel of a man, I have the faculty of controlling my temper when I think it desirable to do so, and, on the present occasion, I contented myself with silently wishing my amiable spouse in Jericho. Seeing I made no answer, my wife continued, —

"If it were not that the children woke you, you would n't get up till ten o'clock. Notwithstanding they wake you thus early, you don't rise until the bell is rung for breakfast, and then I have to call you, over and over again, until my breath is almost gone, and I have n't strength left to serve the coffee."

"I should not think it required a great deal of strength to open the faucet of the coffee-urn, especially as I have heard you complain that it often drops of its own accord, and allows the coffee to run at will."

"Oh, well, make as much sport of me as you like; but don't complain if, when you go to breakfast this morning, everything on the table, including the coffee, be cold, for, positively, I will not call you. If you won't get up when the bell rings, why you can lie abed and eat a cold breakfast after the others have finished."

"Very well, my dear," I said, "have it your own way; though if I can't have my breakfast, and a hot one at that, any hour I may wish it, in this house, why, I can get it at Delmonico's when I go down-town. On the whole, I think I should prefer, for a change, to do so. I should not have to wait on the children, carving tough steaks, nor will you have to turn out coffee for me."

"Well, do you know," said my wife, "I really believe you would like to do that. I think you would actually enjoy taking your meals away from your family. You would n't mind anything about the expense of such proceedings, so long as it was for your gratification; but if I should do so, you would declare it the height of foolishness. Why, if I stop at Mendes' and get a cup of chocolate, some day when I am wearied out with shopping for you and the children, you think it extravagant, and I never, indeed, hear the last of it."

"Well, but chocolate is such abominable stuff," I said; "it sticks up one's moustache so. I cannot imagine how any one can like it."

"Fortunately," my wife said, "I have no moustache to be soiled with it, and, besides, I like chocolate."

"Very well, if you like it," I said, "I am sure I have no objection to your drinking it; but don't, for gracious' sake, be recommending it to me, for if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is chocolate."

"But I have not recommended it," my wife replied, "though I think it would be better for you to drink than the strong coffee you now use. Coffee makes you nervous and irritable."

"I am not irritable," I said; "and I doubt if a more even-tempered and amiable man does, or ever did, or ever will exist, than I am."

"My father," began my wife; but I interrupted her with declaring that I did n't wish to hear a word about her father or his amiability. My wife put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"No!" she exclaimed, "you never will permit me to say a word about my dear dead father. If he had known, when he resigned me to you, that you would have treated me in the harsh manner in which you do, he never would have consented until I had consent for you to marry me."

Now, if you would have been a runaway match, my dear,

that is certain; for you were so deeply in love with me that all the fathers in Christendom could n't have kept you away from me."

"Oh, yes, you may say that," my wife said, smiling in spite of herself; "but if you think such light talk is going to make me forget your unkind expressions in regard to my father, you are much mistaken. I only wish I had known as much when I married you as I now do."

"I really wish you had," I replied, "for then I should not have experienced the annoyances which your lack of housekeeping knowledge has brought upon me. If, when we were first married, you had known as much about cooking as you now do, how much better I might have lived. What delicate light biscuits I should have eaten, instead of the heavy ones I have been obliged to devour! What juicy meats I might have carved, in place of the overdone joints I have had to dissect! What" —

"Never mind," interrupted my wife, "going any farther into the subject, for the knowledge I regret not to have possessed has no reference to any housekeeping accomplishments. I refer to your irritable disposition, which, if I had been aware you possessed, would have deterred me from ever marrying you."

"Good gracious! my dear," I exclaimed, "you don't say so! How glad I am that you did n't find it out. Just to think that if you had known as much about me fifteen years ago as you do now, we would not have been married! What a narrow escape I had of being a bachelor!"

"There it is again," said my wife; "make as much fun about what I say as you like; sneer at me as much as you please; but I guess that one of these days you 'll find I am in earnest."

"Well, my dear, all I can say is, that I should be very sorry to believe it. If I am irritable, as you declare I am, perhaps there are some acts of yours which serve to make me so; at all events, you must endeavor to bear with my

humors, and I will endure yours. But — don't you think we had both better get up, for it must be nearly eight o'clock, and at this season of the year I don't care to lie abed any later."

And, rising, I left my amiable spouse to her reflections.

TWELFTH INFELICITY.

MY WIFE HAS A HEADACHE.

"WHAT in the world is the matter with you now, my dear?" I said to my amiable spouse, who, on my return home from business, I found with a white handkerchief tied about her head, while a strong scent of camphor pervaded the house.

"I should n't think you would have to ask what is the matter, for you might know I have one of my terrible headaches," my wife replied.

"Well, I am very sorry to hear it," I said.

"Of course you are very sorry to hear it," she answered, "for you think I 'll not be able now to attend to getting you your dinner."

"Don't, my dear," I said, "worry about dinner. There is no necessity for you to go into the kitchen, that I am aware of, for the cook can get dinner just as well as if you were there to direct her."

"But the cook left me this morning, I would have you understand, because I would not allow her to make fresh coffee for her breakfast. She said that which we drank was not strong enough."

"Well, never mind it," I answered. "I am glad she is gone. She was very wasteful and extravagant."

"Oh, it is easy enough for you to say 'never mind it,' and 'you 're glad she is gone,' but you don't have to get the dinners, and think, I suppose, that I will go into the kitchen and prepare the meals, till another cook arrives; but I don't intend to do it."

"I am sure I do not wish you to, my dear," I said. "I

had much rather go without both breakfast and dinner than for you to go into the kitchen and prepare them."

"You say so," said my wife, "but you don't mean it. You would rather have me slave to death, and burn myself up over the range, than go without your dinners. And now, when my head aches so that I can barely see, I have got to go and get dinner for you."

"But I tell you, my dear," I replied, "that you need not. I am not hungry, and I can do without any dinner to-day."

"Then you must have dined down-town. That is the way you like to serve me. When I am just ready to get a good dinner for you, and have puzzled my brains all day thinking of what you will like to eat, you come home and tell me that you have no appetite, and have been to dinner."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, "if you want to get a dinner for me, get it. I won't stop you."

"Of course you wouldn't stop me," she answered. "You'd let me get a dozen dinners for you in one day, even when you had no appetite to eat any of them."

"You are certainly, my dear," I said, "the most unreasonable woman I ever met. Now I tell you distinctly, you may get me a dinner or not, as you please; do whichever you like best, and I shall be satisfied; but if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is being obliged to go without my dinner."

"Of course," chimed in my wife, "if I failed to get dinner for you to-day, I should never hear the last of it. You pretend not to wish me to get it, but if I didn't, I think there would be an exciting time in this house. The innocent children would suffer, I know, and I would be put down with all kind of expressions. I knew you were vexed the moment you entered the room. The ejaculation you made when you scented the camphor convinced me of that, even if the hateful way in which you threw your gloves into your hat had not been sufficient. Then, too, when you

drew off your boots, you let them fall heavily on the floor, as if it delighted you to make my poor head ache more. Oh, you men are cruel to your wives, and you take pleasure in being so!"

"Well, never mind," I said, "saying anything more about it. The fact is, I have decided to have my dinner, and if I can't obtain it here, I will go where I can. It seems to me you make a great fuss about a simple headache. In my opinion, a headache is the lightest of all maladies. Quiet, and cold-water bandages, are better than all the camphor and loud talking, which are the usual accompaniments of headaches in this house. Listen! if you will lie down on the lounge and not speak another word to-night, I'll get my own dinner."

Instead of following my advice, my wife began to weep. Now, if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to see a woman in tears. I essayed to soothe my wife, but she would not be soothed.

"If you choose," she said, "to make sport of me and my headache, I cannot prevent it; but you'll be sorry for it by-and-by. I sometimes think that we shall not live together much longer."

"Now, my dear," I said, "don't speak so; your health is pretty good, notwithstanding these troublesome headaches. I think, indeed, we may both live many years yet."

"Oh, I have no doubt," she replied, "but that we shall both exist a score of years longer, only I think it doubtful if we live together. Your treatment of me is so cruel, that I fear we shall separate. And I am sure none of my friends would censure me for it if they only knew what I suffer and endure. For fifteen years I have borne with your irritability, hoping that as you grew older you would overcome it; but, on the contrary, it seems to increase upon you, until now there is scarcely an hour passes, when you are in the house, but you are fault-finding and cavilling at something. You can't endure to know that I am sick, even though I don't complain, and keep my sufferings to myself."

"Well, now, suppose we separate," I said, "who will take the children?"

"I think," said my wife, evincing considerable feeling, "that the children ought to go with me. In the first place, you don't know how to take care of them. Your idea of domestic government is very erroneous, and, besides, you would be apt to treat them cruelly."

"Very well," I said; "I don't think I should care to be troubled with the children. You might have them and welcome. I would be freer without them, and could go and come as I wished, nor be obliged to consult their comfort in any degree. Why I should be quite a bachelor again, would n't I?"

"You seem to enjoy the idea so greatly," my wife said, "that I am not certain whether it would not be conferring too much happiness on you for me to obtain a separation. At all events I won't do it at present."

"No, nor any time in the future, my dear," I said. "The fact is, if I am hasty and irritable occasionally, as you declare, I get over it in a moment, and my spells of good-nature are worth more than the life-long evenness of temper which belong to other men. You obtained a prize, my dear, in me, which I fear you do not appreciate as you ought. But how does your head feel now, my love?"

"I declare," said my wife, smiling, "it is entirely gone. I think you must have magnetized me and drawn it away."

"I think I frightened it away," I said. "My suggestion that we separate, evidently had a good effect upon you."

"But you did n't suggest it," my wife replied. "It was I who spoke of it."

"Well, it is all the same," I said; "you or I, for we are both one, you know."

"I really believe," she added, "that you do not intend to vex me as you so often do; but you must acknowledge that you are provoking at times."

"Certainly," I answered, "I'll acknowledge anything that you may desire."

"Now that is provoking," she said, "and I don't want you to do it."

"Very well, then," I said, "I'll not do it; but I deny it is provoking."

"But I tell you it is," my wife replied. "It provokes me."

"Very well," I said; "then I'll say no more about it. But what about dinner? Are we not to have any to-day?"

"Well, the truth is," my wife said, "there is a chicken-pie in the refrigerator, which, with the vegetables Katy has cooked, will perhaps suffice for to-day."

"Nothing can be better," I answered; "and if you will only have a chicken-pie for dinner when you have a headache, why I don't care if you have one every week."

"Which do you mean," asked my wife, smiling, — "the pie or the headache?"

"Oh, the pie, of course," I said. "As for the headache, I trust you will never have one again as long as you live."

And then we went to dinner.

THIRTEENTH INFELICITY.

IN THE TWILIGHT.

"WHAT a confounded noise you make, my dear, with that piano," I said to my amiable spouse. "For the last half hour I have been endeavoring to get a wink of sleep; but no sooner do I lose myself than you come down with a crescendo or other kind of movement, which startles me as if a cannon had been fired at my side. Why you can't practise in the morning, when I am absent, instead of waiting until evening, when I come home, is a matter I don't understand. You know well enough that if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is the thrumming on a piano."

"I really thought," my wife replied, "that the air I was playing would soothe and please you. It used to be a favorite of yours before we were married, and I like it because it revives happy memories."

"Well, I don't object to your 'reviving happy memories;'" but you will greatly oblige me by letting the keys of the piano rest for a while. I like to take a nap just after dinner; but for several days past I have been unable to do so, because you would practise your abominable marches and quicksteps. I hear enough martial music when I am downtown, and I don't care to listen to it after I get home."

"I fear," my wife answered, "that you are not as patriotic as I wish you were."

"Oh, I am patriotic enough, my dear," I replied, "and go for the Union with all my heart; but then I don't want to be disturbed with having Yankee Doodle dinned into my ears every hour in the twenty-four."

"But I was not playing that air, my dear; it was 'Love Not,' which I am sure you used to like."

"Perhaps I did," I answered, "and I can but wish now, especially that you keep me awake with it, that I had followed the advice it gives. I knew it was a march, too, you were playing, for all the military bands employ it as a stock-piece. But why will you keep drumming on that piano when I have just told you I want to sleep?"

"I had no idea," my wife said, "that you could sleep when you were talking; but, if you desire it, I will play no more."

"Well, I do desire it," I said; "and, what is more, I wish you would play only in the morning, and not in the evening."

"In the morning, my dear," my wife replied, "I have other things to attend to. It is only in the evening, when the little ones are in their beds, that I have an opportunity of touching the keys of my piano. Still I will give up my music entirely, lock the instrument, and give you the key, rather than you should go without your nap. I wish, though, you would converse more with me than you do, and not be all the time writing, or reading the newspapers, or sleeping, when you are in the house."

"Well, you certainly are a most unreasonable woman, if you think I have nothing to do but entertain you. Don't I talk to you at the table?"

"Yes you do," she replied; "but what is the subject of your conversation? Simply finding fault with what you are eating, and scolding the children because they, taking their cue from you, refuse to eat what you give them. You never relate to me what is going on in the world, nor say pleasant things to me, nor tell me you love me."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, "how can I tell you I love you when my mouth is filled with bread and butter. Besides, I told you so once, and I don't see the object in continually reiterating it."

"A wife," she replied, "never wearies of hearing her husband say he loves her. Why, even you, before we were married, used to want me to say over and over again that I loved you. You certainly have not forgotten it."

"I'm sure I don't remember," I said; "but, please, don't say anything more about it, for I want to go to sleep."

"Well, I have not forgotten it, if you have," my wife answered, with a sigh, "and it is well for you, perhaps, that I do remember it?"

"Now, my love," I cried, "of course we both remember it; but won't you stop your talking so that I can take my nap; for, if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to be deprived of my after-dinner nap."

My wife said nothing; but, closing the piano, she left it, and taking a seat near the window, opened a volume of engravings. Rustle, rustle went the leaves. I endured it for five minutes, then, —

"My dear," I said, "if you expect I can sleep while you are rattling the pages of that book, you are greatly mistaken. You might as well play on the piano."

"You can't be very sleepy," she replied, "if this keeps you awake. You are too nervous to go to sleep."

"But I will go to sleep," I said, "and I am not nervous either. I don't see why you should wish to provoke me by saying I am nervous, and seeking to keep me awake."

"Such an object," she answered, "is very far from being my intention; indeed, I wish you were asleep."

"Of course," I said, "you want me to go to sleep. You never seem to be at all satisfied with me unless when I am asleep. Then, fortunately, you can find nothing in my actions with which to find fault."

"Why, then," said the provoking woman, "don't you go to sleep?"

"Now!" I exclaimed, "I will not go to sleep."

"Come, then," said my wife, "sit beside me, and watch the twilight deepening in the west."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, "if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to see the twilight deepening in the west."

"Very well," my wife answered, "if you do not care for it, I have nothing more to say. There was a time, however, when it gave you pleasure to sit by me in the twilight. You were more gentle to me then than you now are, and never spoke a harsh or unkind word."

"Why will you forever be talking to me," I asked, "about things that happened years ago, when you know very well that I have forgotten all about them? Enjoy the present, is my motto, and let the past and the future take care of themselves."

My wife made no reply to my last remark, so we both remained silent for some minutes. At length she said, —

"As you do not wish to watch the twilight, I will have the gas lighted;" and, rising from her chair, she went toward the bell. As she passed me I seized her hand, and drew her to a place on the lounge beside me.

"Never mind about lighting the gas at present," I said; "the bill for it is high enough every month, without burning it before it is dark. I want to ask you a question."

My wife, folding her hands resignedly on her lap, looked off, through the window, at the deepening twilight.

"Look at me, my dear," I said, "and not out-of-doors."

She turned her eyes toward mine. There were tears in them.

"I thought I should find it so," I continued; "you are always weeping. Why can't you be happy and contented, as I am?"

"Are you happy and contented?" she asked, in reply.

"Certainly I am," I answered; "have I not a wife who loves — to provoke me, and children who always are fretful and engaged in mischief! Pray, for what more can a man ask?"

"It is cruel in you — as cruel as the grave — to speak so," my wife said.

"Pooh!" I exclaimed, "your heart is as soft as dough."

"Yes, and as heavy as lead," she added.

"You can't bear for me to speak a word," I said, "that is not complimentary to you. But how many times have I been obliged to listen to words from you which have vexed me more than you can imagine?"

"I am sure," said my wife, "I never have said aught to you which has caused you half the anguish which your words have caused me. If, in spite of all you have said to me, I did not believe that you loved me, I should, indeed, be broken-hearted. I make many allowances for you which I would not for another, as I know you were a petted boy, spoiled to such a degree, indeed, through indulgence, that I often wonder you passed as scathless through such a trying ordeal as you have. Naturally, you possess a good heart, but" —

"Say no more, my dear," I interrupted, taking her hand, "you speak like an oracle. I was spoilt, and I fear my wife is not changing the early treatment. You know, I am certain — or else you would not endure it as patiently as you do — that I am far from meaning any of the cruel and provoking words I often say, but that, even at the moment I am uttering them, my heart actually grieves for the pain I know I am causing you, and yearns to clasp you to my breast, as once I did, and now again I do, and, with the twilight deepening in the west, whisper, 'I love you, love you, darling one!'"

FOURTEENTH INFELICITY.

THE MORNING AFTER.

"WHAT in the world is the matter with you?" I asked my wife, when, after having finished my breakfast, I moved my chair back from the table preparatory to reading the morning papers.

"Nothing," she replied, in a tone, however, which clearly signified the reverse.

"But I know there is," I answered; "for you have spoken scarcely a word since I sat down to breakfast."

"I did not suppose," she said, "that you cared to have me speak. It does not seem probable that a husband, who will leave his wife alone an entire evening, as you have done, could have any wish to hear her utter a word."

"A good deal will depend, my dear, under those circumstances," I replied, "as to what the subject of her conversation may be. If she be likely to find fault with him for having passed one evening out of — say a month, away from home, why, then, I think she had better remain silent."

"Oh, you think so, do you!" she exclaimed; "then all I can say is, that, so far as I am concerned, I will not have my tongue tied, but will tell you just what I think of such acts."

"Very well, my dear," I said. "Go on; I will listen. But first let me tell you that I think it was very unkind in you not to sit up for me last night. A good wife will sit up for her husband, when he is out, until morning, if he come not home before. Then, too, let me tell you, it is confoundedly unpleasant to find all the lights out, and the very gas itself turned off, and not a candle or match to be

found anywhere. If it had not been for the moonlight which streamed in at the window, I should have broken my neck stumbling over the chairs, which, it seems to me, were purposely placed where I might run against them. Now, if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to break my neck stumbling over chairs in the dark."

"Well, you are a nice man, I must say," my wife replied. "I really had no idea that you were in the extreme state which your own words imply. In the first place, the gas was left burning, and, now that you have drawn my attention to it, I see it is burning at this moment: please turn it off, will you? In the next, it was raining hard when you came home, and consequently the moon was not shining. As for your not being able to find the candle and matches, why, I think it would prove a matter of little consequence to one who could not tell gas-light from moonlight, though, so far as the fact of the case goes, both the candle and matches were in their usual place. Lastly, as to your breaking your neck by stumbling over chairs, why all I have to say is, that I think you will be likely to live a thousand years before such an event occurs. What I most look at and regret, however, is that you are setting a most pernicious example to the children."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, "what a woman you are to talk. Why the children were sound asleep when I returned, and if you did n't tell them, they would n't know whether I came home on my head or feet. I must say, too, I think it was very wrong in you to pretend to be asleep, and allow me to stumble around in the dark as you did."

"But, I tell you, it was not dark," my wife replied; "I saw every step you took, and if you had broken your neck over the chairs, as you imagine you almost did, I should have been the first to have known it."

"I suppose you would have known it," I said, "even before I were aware of it myself."

"Very likely," she answered, "for you seemed to know

very little. But suppose, now, you tell me where you were last evening. You left the house, saying you were going to the druggist's, and would return in a few moments. I waited for you patiently till eleven o'clock, when I went to bed, and I know it must have been after twelve when you came home. I did not know but that you had been robbed and murdered, and I really was very much alarmed about you."

"You must have been exceedingly alarmed," I answered, to have gone to sleep as you did. The fact is, if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to come home and find my wife abed."

"You have just said the contrary," the amiable woman answered, "when you have found me sitting up for you. The truth is, there is no pleasing you men. We poor women are snubbed and curbed at every step in life by you lords of creation. Oh, I sometimes wish I were a man, if it were only to show your sex how to treat ours properly. But you have not yet told me where you were last night."

"Oh, I went," I replied, "to hear Madame Bishop sing the 'Flag of Our Union,' and I wish you had been with me."

"I should have liked nothing better," she answered; "but you never asked me to accompany you. Well, how were you pleased?"

"Oh, I did n't hear her," I said; "I met a friend who invited me to go and see the Clinton Guards drill. They are a splendid *corps*, my dear. I wish you had been with me."

"I wish I had," my wife replied; "but remember you did not ask me. Tell me, though, how the Guards appeared."

"Well, actually, my dear," I replied, "I did n't see them. My friend and myself thought we 'd stop first and take some oysters at the Waverley; and while eating them, we concluded we would go to the Winter Garden and hear Edwin Booth in 'Hamlet.' Really, I wish you had been with us."

"I wish I had," my wife answered, "for, of course, you went to the Winter Garden."

"Well, no," I answered; "but what a woman you are to ask questions. You 'd make a good lawyer. I hope you are through now, at all events, for if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to be cross-questioned."

"But you have not told me yet where you went," she said. "So you did n't hear Booth, after all?"

"Not exactly," I replied, "although we met a friend of my friend's whose name was Booth, and with whom we took some more oysters."

"Oh, you took more oysters, did you!" my wife ejaculated. "I noticed your appetite was exceedingly limited this morning. Well, after these second oysters, where did you go?"

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, "I won't answer any more questions. I have patiently borne being catechized till you have extracted from me everything that I can tell about where I went, and what I did, last night; and I won't endure it any longer. If you want to know anything more, you 'll have to see my friends and ask them."

"I am afraid, my dear," my wife replied, sadly, "that you went somewhere that you would not care to have me know."

"Well, you certainly are a most suspicious and foolish woman," I said, "to think your husband would go where he would be ashamed to take his wife. I only wish you had been with me."

"I truly wish I had," she replied.

"The fact is, my dear," I said, "that, after the second plate of oysters, I started to come home."

"Well, you stopped and got more oysters, I presume?" my wife suggested.

"Yes, I believe we did," I replied; "and then after that, some time — I don't know when, exactly — I got home. I am afraid I ate too many oysters, my dear, for I

have quite a headache this morning. Do you think that oysters, as a general thing, are as good in June as they are earlier in the season?"

"I don't think they are, especially too many of them," my wife replied, with a sad smile; "and, my dear, let me beg of you not to eat any more with your and your friend's friend. Promise me that, will you?"

I promised, by kissing her on the cheek, as I smoothed the hair from her brow.

"And you'll not go to hear Madame Bishop, or to see the Guards drill, or to the Winter Garden," she continued, "unless you take me with you?"

I said I would not, and then — why, then she kissed me.

FIFTEENTH INFELICITY.

SEEING THE SEVENTH HOME.

"THERE it is again!" exclaimed my wife, in her most provoking tone, as I entered the house at a rather late hour on Saturday evening.

"There what is again?" I asked.

"Why, your staying out till midnight, and eating oysters," she replied.

"Not an oyster," I said; "you are much mistaken if you think I have tasted of any. All I have partaken of since my breakfast this morning has been a bite of the rations of our artist-soldier friend of the Seventh, and a sip of elderberry wine."

"Has the Seventh Regiment returned home?" asked my wife.

"It has," I answered, "and a noble and hearty reception it received."

"What time did it arrive?" my wife inquired.

"Oh, about four o'clock," I said; "but the soldiers did n't reach their armory till late in the evening. So I concluded to stay down-town and welcome our friend."

"Yes! that is always the way," she remarked; "you think nothing of staying away from your family, and witnessing all the military displays, while I am obliged to remain at home, and watch the children. And this evening, while you 've been enjoying yourself, listening to pleasant conversation, I have been sitting up for you till my head aches, and I am ready to fall asleep."

"Then why," I said, "did you not go to bed? Now, if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to have

my wife sit up for me when I am out. I wish to gracious women would know enough to go to bed when they are sleepy."

"I shall, probably," replied my wife, "follow such a course in future, for there is no telling what will suit you. I sometimes think I 'll never again endeavor to please you, but will do everything for my own gratification."

"Very well," I replied, "suit yourself, and, of course, I shall be satisfied."

"To-day, for instance," my wife continued, "when you went away at morning you said you would be home early, and wished me to have dinner ready for you at five o'clock. I did have it ready for you, and, what is more, I had one which I knew you would like. Some of the dishes I prepared; but five o'clock came and 'my lord' did not make his appearance. He was looking at the Seventh Regiment marching up Broadway, and never gave a thought to his poor wife at home, who was waiting dinner for him, and worrying her life almost out because, forsooth, it was spoiling."

"What! the dinner or the life?" I asked, cruelly.

"Both, my lord," she answered.

"Proceed, my lady," I said; "your lord is all attention."

"I have nothing more to say," she added, "and now I think I will retire. Good night!"

"But," I exclaimed, "I have not been to dinner yet, and I don't think it would be justifiable in you to go to bed and leave me here to starve; for if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is to be starved to death."

"I think," she answered, "there is very little fear of your coming to that pass. You know where the refrigerator is, and you can help yourself to anything you find in it. I am not going to set the table and get dinner for you after midnight. Besides, you told me, I think, that you had been dining with the artist-soldier of the Seventh off of his rations. If that is the case, I don't see why you should want another dinner."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, "I only said I had 'a bite.' You don't think I could make a meal off of salt corned beef and stale bread, do you?"

"Why not, if your friend, who is as accustomed to good fare as you are, could?"

"Oh, that is very well," I replied, "for you to say; but remember, he is used to it by this time, while I am not. By the way, I brought home, for your especial delectation, a bit of the ration referred to; — there it is; help yourself."

"Why!" exclaimed my wife, regarding the meat with evident surprise and repugnance, "they have cut it the wrong way."

"Oh," I replied, "I imagine it matters very little to the soldiers in which manner it is cut, if they but get enough of it."

"You don't mean to say," my wife added, "that our friend, who paints such exquisite landscapes, has lived on such food ever since he has been away?"

"I mean to say," I replied, "that that bit of corned beef is an excellent sample of what the government provides for our soldiers. The quality of it, I am assured, is better than what is usually given out. If any private soldier has had better food than that, he has been obliged to pay for it out of his own pocket. I am inclined to think that some of our poor fellows don't even get enough of inferior rations."

"Then they must have a hard time of it," said my wife, "and the government is to blame. I have a great mind to offer my services as cook to one of the regiments."

"That would be extremely patriotic," I said; "but it seems to me that patriotism, like charity, should begin at home. And as I happen to be greatly in want of something to eat at this moment, I wish you would get it for me."

"Can't you get it yourself," she replied, "just as well as for me to go down-stairs to the refrigerator at this late hour. I am tired, and half sick, and don't feel as if I could take a single step more than is absolutely necessary."

"Very well," I answered, "I will get it myself; but I do not see the use of your sitting up for me, if you won't get me anything to eat when I come home. The fact is, you have had your dinner, and now you don't care whether I have mine or not."

"If you had been home at the hour you promised to be," said my wife, "you would have had a nice dinner; but now, I really do not much care whether you have any at all. Besides, I think it very injurious to eat just as one is going to bed. You would rest much better if you would go without eating, and your appetite for breakfast would be good."

"That is certainly the coolest proposition I have had made to me to-day," I said. "Go to bed without my dinner! You might as well ask me to go without my breakfast after I get up in the morning. No, the fact is, I am hungry, and I want my dinner. I did n't get any down-town, for I knew that you would find fault with me if I did, and compute the number of loaves of bread, quarts of milk, pairs of shoes, stockings, and gloves, for the children, and bonnets and silk dresses for yourself, that the money for my dinner would have purchased. No matter if my dinner had only cost fifty cents, you would have made a wonderful ado about it, and I should have had the dyspepsia on account of it. I have grown wiser than when I was first married, and have learned, if I would enjoy peace in my home, not to eat dinners away from my own mahogany."

"I am certainly pleased," my wife said, "to hear you speak thus; but I should like to have you act up to what you say. I have not seen a week since we were married, but that you have dined out once, if not oftener, in it. You have taken dinner down-town twice, to my knowledge, this very week, and I am not certain that you have gone without your dinner to-day. At all events, it seems hardly probable. As for me, how many times, let me ask, have I dined away from home without you, in the fifteen long years we have been married? I don't think it has been

half a dozen times, and yet you find fault with me for not getting dinner for you at midnight."

"Really," I said, "I don't see the relation between the first part of your sentence and its conclusion. I can't understand what your dining out has to do with getting dinner for me at this hour."

"That is always the way you seek to avoid an explanation with me. If the grammatical construction of my remark does n't please you, why, I can't help it. You can arrange it to suit yourself, while you are getting your own dinner; but, for my part, I will bid you good-night, for I am going to bed."

And she went.

SIXTEENTH INFELICITY.

MY WIFE WANTS COUNTRY AIR.

"DO you want to go into the country, do you?" I said to my amiable spouse, as she busied herself in arranging the trimming on our little girl's bonnet. The little one herself had just asked her mother if she were to wear that bonnet when she went to see grandmother.

"Yes," my wife replied, "I think it would be of benefit to the children. They, as well as myself, need change of air."

"I suppose you have fully decided when and where to go," I said.

"No," she answered; "I meant first to consult with you before I came to any decision."

"Well, that was wise in you, at least," I replied, "for my private opinion is that you won't see the country this year, at all events. I don't understand, either, why you can't remain in the city just as well as I. You never hear me talk of going into the country. Why, I should as soon think of going to Africa. The city is always much cooler than the country, and everything which serves to make life endurable is to be found in town, while out of it you can get nothing. If there be one place I dislike more than another, it is the country."

"But remember, my dear," said my wife, "that you very often go into the country for a day or two at a time on business, but I never obtain such a change."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, "I don't see why you should. You have everything provided for you, and have

nothing to do but stay at home and enjoy yourself, while I must run the risk of losing my life on railroads in attending to business, so as to enable me to provide for you and the children."

"You find time though, on these occasions," my wife said, "to get a few hours' fishing or shooting; so it is not always business alone that keeps you away."

"Well," I said, "suppose I do occasionally steal an hour from business to shoot or fish, have n't I a perfect right to do so? You speak as if it were a sin. I 'm certain I work hard enough after I get back to pay for the indulgence. You wives, though, think that husbands ought to do nothing else but work for their families. And whether the weather be hot or cold, it matters little to you; but the moment June arrives, you, forsooth, begin to talk about the heat, and your health, and change of air for the children, and summer complaints; and hint, and insinuate, and suggest, and finally declare, that you must go into the country to escape that boisterous Fourth of July, with its noise and dirt. You want to go only for a few days, but as soon as you get away you settle yourselves down for the entire summer under green trees; and when we poor husbands write for you to come home, after the Fourth is passed, you answer that it would be dangerous to take the children back to the city until the cool weather arrives. So the result is that we husbands destroy our health by hard work and partaking of eating-house dinners, while you sit in muslin gowns, and read new novels, and eat strawberries and cream, and enjoy yourselves generally, without cares or annoyances of any kind."

"Well, I confess," said my wife, "that you have drawn a graphic picture, but one that is scarcely correct. For my part, I have my cares and troubles when in the country as well as I do in town; but the change of life is agreeable and beneficial, and enables me to endure the confinement which is mine the rest of the year."

"Well," I said, "I don't see how you will be able to go this season; the times are so hard I can scarcely obtain money enough to enable us to live at home. You know, as well as I do, that I have met with serious losses during the last few months, and how I can spare a cent for unnecessary expenses is more than I can tell."

"I shall not require more than a few hundred dollars," said my wife, "to get ready with; and then our board in the country will not be much."

"I don't wish to hear you say any more about it," I said. "I can't give you a few hundred dollars, and you must content yourself with remaining in town this summer. Oh, you need n't look so glum about it, for it can't be helped."

"I suppose," my wife said, "that if my mother invites me and the children to visit her, that you will not object to our going, especially as it will not cost anything for board, and our entire expenses for the whole three months will be scarcely a hundred dollars."

"I had rather pay for your board for a year," I said, "at a fashionable hotel, than have you spend a week in that miserable village where your mother lives. I don't see why you can't be contented to stay at home with me, instead of forever wanting to be visiting your mother. Why it seems to me as if you were there only the other day, and now you wish to go and spend the summer with her. This is another of your mother's confounded conspiracies against my happiness. What she, who has two or three daughters at home with her, wants you there, too, for, I don't know. I should think she would be glad that you were off her hands. As for her having the children under her control, I won't consent to it. She spoils them by indulgence, and destroys all the good effects of my teachings. What grandmothers were invented for, I don't know. If there be one class of persons I dislike more than another, it is grandmothers."

"I am inclined to think," said my wife, maliciously, "that if it had not been for you, my dear mother would not now have been a grandmother. So that you have yourself to blame, after all, simply because you married me."

"Pshaw!" I exclaimed, "if I had not married you, some one else would, and then the old lady, I have no doubt, would have been grandmother to a lot of ugly imps with red hair."

"I wish," said my wife, "that you would not speak to me in that way; and, moreover, I don't think it respectful in you to call my mother an old lady."

"I may be mistaken," I said, "but it seems to me that a woman of sixty has a right to be called old. Why, I sometimes look at you, and imagine I perceive traces of age on your face."

"I am not so old as you are, at all events," said my wife; "and if age is leaving its marks upon me, it is owing to your unkindly treatment. But I should like to know whether I can take the children and make my mother a visit."

"How do you know that your mother wants you?" I asked.

"Because," my wife replied, "she has written for us to come."

"I thought so," I said. "Then all your talk about going into the country to board was mere moonshine?"

"No," she answered, "for I had rather go elsewhere than to my mother's, because I think she has cares enough without my adding to them. But still I think it would be more advisable for me to go to my mother's than to remain in the city during the hot weather."

"Well, now, my dear," I said, "listen to me. I have invited my sister and her family to pass the month of July with us, and I received a letter to-day from her, saying that she will be here on the first of the month; so, under the circumstances, I don't see how it will be possible for you to leave home until August, and then, if you like, you can

spend a few weeks with your mother. My sister has not been here since last autumn, and her boys were anxious to spend the coming Fourth of July in the city. I knew it would be an agreeable change for her and them, as the country is dull enough where they live, and the Fourth is always a stupid day in their vicinity. I ordered to-day," I continued, not heeding the sad looks of my wife, nor seeming to notice the tears that filled her eyes, "fifty dollars' worth of fireworks, which I think will be enough to keep her six boys busy all the Fourth. You look as if you did n't think that quantity would be sufficient for them," I said, as with a clouded brow she turned her face from me, gazing out of the window, toward the setting sun, which was, doubtless, just at that moment sinking behind the mountains which shelter the village where her mother lives. "I will order more if you deem it necessary."

"Do as you think best," she replied; "I have nothing to say."

"But what do you think about it?" I still persisted.

"I think fifty dollars enough," she said, "to throw away in fireworks, in such hard times as these."

"Well," I cried, "I am glad to see you have grown economical within a few minutes. By the way, you had better write to your mother and tell her you can't go to her at present; but in August, if the times are better, and I can spare the money, you shall certainly go."

"I don't desire to go at all, now," she replied; "it is not likely that I shall be able or well enough to get ready to go anywhere, after having waited a month on your sister and her six great boys."

"Now, you had better sulk a little," I said. "It has always been just so, since we were married: I can't invite any of my relations here but you get vexed about it. At all events, my sister and 'her six great boys,' as you call them, are coming here, and you 'll have to make the best of it."

My wife said nothing in rejoinder, but laid down, with a sigh, the bonnet she had been re-trimming for the little girl to wear, when she should go to visit her grandmother, and, putting her handkerchief to her eyes, left the room.

"That thing is got along with," I said to myself, as the door closed behind my wife; "and now, let me light my cigar, and read the evening papers."

But, somehow, I could find nothing in the papers sufficiently interesting to keep my thoughts from wandering to my amiable wife. I puffed furiously at my cigar, in the hope that by so doing I should soothe my irritability; but it was of no avail, and so as a last resort I went and found my wife, with whom I made a treaty of peace.

SEVENTEENTH INFELICITY.

I ORDER A DINNER.

BY the by, my dear," I said to my wife, as I drew on my gloves preparatory to going down-town the other morning, "I very nearly forgot to tell you that I have asked three or four friends to dine with me to-day."

"You don't mean to say," exclaimed my wife, "that you have asked them to come home with you to dinner?"

"I certainly do not mean to say anything else," I answered. "Where should they dine with me, if not at my own table, I should like to know?"

"Why, I thought," she replied, "you had perhaps asked them to take dinner with you at the 'MAISON DORÉE,' of which I hear you talk."

"I don't see why," I replied, "you should *think* any such thing. The fact is, you think a great deal too much. If you would do more, and think less, my home would be much pleasanter than it is."

"I am sure," said my wife, "I do much more than I am able to, and how I am going to prepare dinner for your company to-day I do not know. I wish, my dear, you would not invite gentlemen to dine with you, unless you let me know of it at least the day before. I am not always prepared to entertain company at a few hours' notice, and to-day, especially, it is very inconvenient."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, "I should really like to know when it has ever been convenient. I do not remember, during the many years of our marriage, of once invit-

ing a friend to dine with me but you declared it to be inconvenient. Now, if there be one word I dislike more than another, it is the word *inconvenient*."

"Well, my dear," she said, "I will do the best I can; but I regret extremely that you selected this day."

"Why this day more than any other?" I asked.

"Because it is washing-day, and it will be almost impossible to prepare a handsome dinner, and do the washing at the same time."

"Well, let the washing go, then," I said. "Who cares! I suppose it will keep till to-morrow, — won't it?"

"But the servant has already commenced it," she answered.

"Then tell her to stop, if you want her to assist you in getting dinner," I said. "I suppose she can let the clothes soak, — can't she?"

"I presume she will be obliged to," my wife replied; "but she will be terribly cross about it, and I dare say, before the dinner is ready, she will drive me distracted."

"Well, if she don't like it," I said, "tell her to go. I would n't be ruled by servants, any way."

"I don't see that sending her away will help me in the least," she replied, "as in that case I should have the dinner to prepare alone, besides a prospect of doing the washing to-morrow."

"Pshaw!" I exclaimed. "You know very well that you will not have to do any such thing; but you like to say so, just to make me think that you will have a terrible time getting dinner for five or six persons."

"Five or six!" exclaimed my wife. "I thought you said three or four."

"Well, now I say," I added, "five or six; and if that is n't satisfactory, I 'll make it seven or eight. I am sure I am not particular."

"It will make very little difference to me," my wife replied, "whether a dozen come. I will see that everything

you provide for the dinner is properly prepared and placed on the table; but for more than that I cannot answer."

"Well, you certainly are a pretty wife," I said, "if you expect that I am going to neglect my business down-town by stopping at the market to select the materials of a dinner. I think if I give you the money to purchase whatever is necessary, you will attend to that part of the matter yourself."

"Now, my dear," my wife answered, "it will be utterly impossible for me to go to market, and also attend to making pastry, and overseeing the cleaning of the silver, the sweeping of the parlors, and a hundred other little matters of which you have no idea. No, you must order from market whatever you wish, and also see that it is sent home. It is now nearly ten o'clock, and this dinner, which, to be properly prepared, ought to have my undivided attention for two days, must be gotten up in six or seven hours."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, "what a fuss you are making about a little dinner. One would think that we never dined at all. Why, all you have to do is to cook a trifle more meat and vegetables than usual. It don't seem much of a task to me."

"Very well," said my wife; "just send home from the market the trifle more meat and vegetables which you think will suffice, and I will attend to having them cooked."

"Very well," I said, "I will try to remember to stop at the market; but if the meat and vegetables don't come in an hour or so, you had better send, or go yourself, to see about them. You know well enough, my dear, that if there be one thing I dislike doing more than another, it is going to the market. Good-bye! Let dinner be ready precisely at six o'clock, and set the table for six persons beside ourselves."

"Stop, my dear," my wife cried; "you have not told me what you intend to have for dinner."

"Yes I have," I replied: "meat and vegetables."

"But what kind of meat," persisted my wife, "and what vegetables? Will you have fish and soup? and strawberries and jellies? and pies and tarts? and what wine will you have put on the ice?"

"I declare," I said, "your questions will drive me crazy. Get the dinner to suit yourself. Have fish and soup, and all the other things you asked about; but don't trouble me with kitchen-matters. Talk to the cook, if you wish to consult some one, and let me rest in peace."

Again I said good-bye, and went toward the door.

"Suppose, before you go," said my amiable spouse, "you give me some money, for I shall be obliged to use considerable in getting this dinner. Every dinner costs money, and such a one as will satisfy you cannot be prepared for nothing."

"You are, certainly," I said, "the most importunate woman I ever met. I really have done nothing for a month past but give you money. Well, how much do you want? Come, don't keep me standing here forever, while you add up on your fingers. Can't you say at once how much you require, and be done with it?"

"I was trying," she replied, "to calculate the sum necessary; but" —

"Don't, for gracious sake," I interrupted, "have any 'buts' in your answer. There, take those bills," I added, placing some bank-notes into her hands; "use what are necessary, and with the remainder buy the summer silk for which you have been teasing me for days past."

My wife examined the bills, smiled sadly, and, shaking her head, said, —

"There is barely sufficient here to pay for the dinner."

"It is all I have," I said, "to spare at present, and if it be not sufficient to pay for both dinner and silk dress, why, I am afraid you will have to do without the dress."

"I wish," said my wife, "you were not going to give

this dinner. It will cost a great deal of money, and I have no doubt but that the anxiety and care I shall have to undergo in attending to it will make me ill."

"Oh, yes," I cried, "that is just the way you women always talk. If you don't have money with which to buy silks and laces whenever you fancy to have them, why you immediately declare yourselves to be ill. I have seen too much of that kind of thing since I was married to be greatly affected by it. I suppose your head aches now, does n't it, love?"

"Yes, it does," she replied, "and how I am going to keep up through the day I don't know. It is not at all probable I shall be able to be present at the dinner, and how you will get along without me I can't possibly imagine."

"Oh, we 'll manage well enough," I replied; "don't give yourself any uneasiness on that account. Keep cool, my love, and get the dinner upon the table, and I 'll see to the rest."

My wife sighed.

"I will do the best I can," she said; "but oh, I do wish you had not invited your friends to-day. I want the dinner to look and taste as well as it is possible for any to be; but the time I have to prepare it in is so short that I doubt if I can do justice to it."

It was evident to me that my wife really feared the dinner might prove a failure. So, after a moment's hesitation, I said, —

"My dear, is the money which I have just given you sufficient to purchase your summer silk?"

My wife brightened up immediately.

"Oh, yes," she answered, "more than enough."

"Very well, then," I replied, "use it for that purpose, and let the dinner go."

"No!" she said, "you and your friends would be disappointed. The dinner will be ready at six o'clock."

"Confound the dinner!" I said. "I won't give it at all.

It has already caused me more trouble than it is worth. Besides, you are not well enough to see to it, and I'll tell my friends that you are ill."

"But that will be scarcely true," she said; "although I am not well, I am far from being ill."

"Never heed that," I said; "my mind is made up. So you need not think any more about dinner. I have decided to dine at the 'MAISON DORÉE' with my friends, so that they will not be disappointed after all."

"Except," said my wife, smiling, "in not having me to preside at the table."

"True, my dear," I replied; "but then we will toast you in a goblet of the 'Flower of Neckar.'"

And we did so.

EIGHTEENTH INFELICITY.

WHERE SHALL WE PASS THE FOURTH?

"DON'T, my dear, say another word about it," I said to my amiable wife, in answer to a desire she expressed to go to the sea-shore with my sister, to pass the Fourth of July. "I can't help it if my sister and her four boys have decided to visit the sea-shore before coming here; it is no reason why you and your girls should go. The other day it appeared to me as if you did not care to see my sister at all, and now you want to leave home to go where she is. For my part I never could find any pleasure at the sea-shore; the beach is always hot, sandy, and shadeless. Then you get your feet wet, and take cold, and have the consumption, and die. Now, if there be one place I dislike more than another, it is the sea-shore."

"Well, then," said my wife, "suppose we go into the country, and pass the day at a quiet farm-house, where we can have fresh milk, and eggs, and all those kind of things?"

"What do you mean, I should like to know," I replied, "by 'all those kind of things'?"

"Why, vegetables just from the garden, and mint," she answered.

"Mint!" I exclaimed. "What should I do with mint?"

"Why, use it in a julep," she said. "I am sure I have often heard you speak of mint-juleps, and, if the mint be freshly gathered, I suppose it makes a better julep."

"I don't believe it," I replied; "but, at all events, that is

the best reason you have yet given for our going into the country. After all, though, the country is not the place for me: farm-houses are miserable affairs, low-roofed, hot, and abounding with spiders. They are always small, and you can't turn round in one without rubbing your coat against its whitewashed walls, or knocking off your hat passing through the low doorways. Really, if there be one place I dislike more than another, it is a farm-house. Think of something else, — can't you?"

My wife sighed.

"Why do you sigh?" I asked. "You are always sighing or weeping; why don't you take matters easily, as I do, and not be forever making yourself miserable? Come, have you thought of some other place to pass the Fourth at?"

"Why not go," she replied, "to our friend the Colonel's place, up the Hudson. He has often invited us, and I have no doubt, he would be pleased to see us. He lives, you know, not far from the Catskills, and we might ride in the afternoon to the Mountain House."

"It is not a bad idea," I said, "but unfortunately the Colonel is with his regiment at Washington, and I don't think his housekeeper would be particularly glad to see us; at all events, I have no desire to see her, for if there be one class of females I dislike more than another, it is housekeepers."

"And yet," said my wife, maliciously, "you often wish I were a good housekeeper."

I paid no attention to this remark, but continued, —

"After all, I don't see that we can do better than to remain at home. I will invite a few friends to dinner, and in the evening we can have fireworks and be patriotic."

"Don't, please, ask any one to dinner," my wife said. "The very thought of being obliged to get dinner on the FOURTH OF JULY, which is always a hot day, and made up of excitement, makes me ill. Still, I would rather get

dinner for you than have you give a dinner away from home, as you did the other evening. Two days' sickness such as was yours after it, to say nothing of the money it cost, and the trouble and care I had in waiting on you, was paying rather too much for a dinner."

"But you forced me into it," I rejoined; "you know well enough that I preferred to have the dinner at home, and if you had not made such an ado about attending to it, I should. Then, too, I would not have been sick, and you would not have been obliged to sit at my bedside for two days. Somehow French dishes never agree with me: I presume because they are so highly seasoned. I am convinced that plainer dishes, such as you prepare, are healthier. Don't you think so?"

"Certainly," my wife answered; "but I am not sure the French dishes were to blame so much as the French wines."

"Now, my dear," I exclaimed, "you must not attempt to injure the reputation of French wines, for of them I drank comparatively little. I partook sparingly, however, of German and Spanish wines, also, as well as several of American production."

"My dear, you need say no more," my wife replied. "I am satisfied. I was in error when I attributed your illness solely to French wines; but," she continued, "we have not settled as to where we shall go to pass the Fourth."

"I have," I replied. "I am going to remain at home, and I shall invite a few friends to spend the evening with me; you can remain with me, or go wherever you like, provided you take the children with you."

"Very well, then," my wife said; "I think I will go and see my mother."

"Go, then," I exclaimed; "but, remember, you need n't come back in one while. When I want you I 'll send for you. Don't you think you had better start to-day?" I suggested.

"Perhaps I had," my wife replied, in her coolest manner. "If I can get the children's clothes ready, I will. As for myself, I am prepared to go at an instant's notice. The truth is, if you would like to know it, that my trunk has been packed a week."

I confess my wife rather surprised me by her answer, and, to tell the truth, pained me by the way in which she spoke. I did not believe she would be willing to leave me alone at home, lest I might be sick, or some evil befall me. So I said, though not as boldly as I had heretofore spoken,

"Well, my dear, the boat leaves at six o'clock, and you have all day in which to prepare for your journey. I will be at the boat at that hour to bid you good-bye; but I really think you had better postpone going for a day or two, until you get your new silk, and the children have a larger summer wardrobe prepared."

"No!" she replied, decidedly, "I will start to-day. I shall not require the silk dress if I go to my mother's, and the money which you gave me to purchase it with I still have, nor shall I require any more for some time. I really wish, though," she continued, her manner and tone evidently softening, "that you were going with us. I know my mother would be glad to see you, and the girls would be delighted."

"I can't help it," I said. "I would n't go for a thousand dollars. Your mother does n't like me, nor I her; and as for your sisters, I hate the whole batch of them. Why they don't get married, so that they would have something else to do besides forever writing to you, coaxing you back to their old-maids' home, I can't imagine."

"My sisters are not old, as you know very well. They are younger than I am, and I am not yet thirty."

"Well, I like that," I said. "Why, you owned to twenty the day I married you, and that was fifteen years ago. Oh, I am a better judge of ages than you, and can tell an old maid from a school-girl the moment I see her."

"Well," exclaimed my wife, resignedly, "I will not argue the point with you; but I tell you my sisters are not old maids."

"At all events, they are old," I said, "whatever else they may be."

My wife, seemingly, paid no attention to my last words, but asked, —

"Where does the boat start from?"

"From its usual pier," I replied. "I don't remember its number; but you, who have sailed from it so often, ought to know."

"I presume I shall be able to find it," she said; "and lest you should not, I will bid you good-bye now. I have to get the children ready for the journey, and must leave you."

She bent forward, as if to kiss me, but I simply said "Good-bye!" and taking my hat, went out of the door into the street. As I passed out of the court-yard, I lifted my eyes toward the window, and saw her standing there. She raised her hand to her lips, as our eyes met, and threw me a kiss from the tips of her fingers. I took no heed of the action, but, slamming the gate behind me, I strode toward the avenue. When I reached the corner, I hailed a passing omnibus, and was on the point of stepping into it, when, chancing to look back, I saw my wife standing at the gate, waving her handkerchief. I told the driver to go on; but, as for myself, I walked back to the house.

"So I forgot my handkerchief, did I?" I asked.

"Oh, no," she replied, "this is mine."

"Very well," I said. "What the deuce did I return for, then?"

"I am sure I don't know," she said, half laughing, "if you don't."

"I think I must have left something behind me, in the house," I said, as, with my wife on my arm, I walked up the court-yard.

"It would be like you to do so," my wife continued; "but what can it be?"

"Can't you guess?" I asked.

"Perhaps I can," she answered.

"Then give it to me," I continued.

My wife bent forward, and — we kissed each other.

"You will scarcely be able to start to-day, I think," I said, after a pause.

"Well, no," she answered; "I hardly think I can get ready."

"Then I 'll not go to the boat to see you off," I added. "But to-morrow, if the weather remains pleasant, I trust you will be ready to start."

"We shall see," she said.

Again I bade her good-bye, and this time, having left nothing behind me, got into the first stage that came along and proceeded down-town.

FIRST FELICITY.

I ATTEND A CLAM-BAKE.

MY wife has gone to visit her mother.

I am happy to be able to state that the children accompanied her. Peace, quietness, and felicity reign in my dwelling. I come and go unquestioned. I stay out late at night without fear of rebuke. I lie abed of mornings, and no one insists on my getting up. My friends pass the evening with me, and there be none who tell me the next day that the window-curtains are filled with tobacco-smoke, and the parlor has the fragrance of a bar-room. If two or three friends come home to dine with me, the cook never asks why I brought them, nor complains of a headache. What is more, she does not insist upon having a new silk dress every week, nor burst into tears if I utter crude and naughty words. The fact is, if there be one thing I like more than another, it is to have my wife visit her mother.

Having resolved to enjoy myself during my wife's absence, I have determined to leave no legitimate source of pleasure untried. In pursuance of this plan, I visited "Nestledown," — the name of a friend's villa, — on Long Island. I went there, supposing that my friend's wife and daughters were alone, and that he was visiting the camps around Washington. He returned from there the very day I went to Nestledown. After all it was as well, perhaps, that he did, for this stepping into the bosom of a man's family in his absence may not be just the thing. I wonder if any one will pay particular attention to my wife while

she is with her mother! I was very cordially received at Nestledown, and dined on broiled spring chicken and fresh green peas. For dessert I partook of strawberries and cream. Now if there be one thing I like more than another, it is a dinner of this kind.

In the evening we drove to Little Neck, on the north side of the island, and had a clam-bake. I think a clam-bake is an excellent institution. In my opinion it is better than a turtle-soup feast or a chowder party. In olden times when moustaches were not worn, turtle-soup and clam or cod chowder were not bad to take; but in these days they have objectionable points.

While the clams were being baked, the Nestledownians and myself took a row on the bay. Although our party was not large, we yet occupied two skiffs. I forgot to say that we engaged a distinguished artist to accompany us for the purpose of making a sketch of the clam-bake. The picture he painted is a pleasing reminiscence of the evening; but fails to convey a correct idea of a clam-bake.

It is very delightful to float on still waters in pretty skiffs, when the full moon, just rising, sheds a silvery light around, and the red blaze of a fire flickers fantastically through the leafy trees, and the air is mild and the night enchanting. The young ladies, seated in the stern of the boat, enjoyed this thing amazingly; but neither the artist nor myself, who blistered our hands in rowing, appreciated it as they did. I confess I enjoyed eating the clams more than I did anything else. My knowledge of clams is quite limited, but my powers of observation are keen. I noticed that Mr. Nestledown selected only the small clams for his plate, and kept pushing the large ones toward mine. I regarded this as extremely kind and polite in him, and lest he should rob himself of all the fine large ones I placed two or three of them upon his plate. But he courteously put them aside, as if they were better than he deserved. I now think they were. Curiosity led me to try one of the

small ones, and thenceforward I devoted my attention solely to them. I think India-rubber overshoes are made of large clams; but if there be one thing I like more than another, it is the small clam from the shores of Long Island.

I observed that the darkies of this neighborhood are a speciality. They are great on the double-shuffle, the pigeon-wing, and that class of antics. While we were eating our clams, a gang of them were displaying their dancing abilities near by, varied with an occasional negro melody. On the whole, I enjoyed the drive, the row on the bay, the clams, and the dancing, very much, and went back to Nestledown exceedingly contented.

The next day, on my return to the city, I wrote a poetical epistle to my wife, which, for the benefit of husbands whose wives may be away from home, I herewith transcribe.

TO MY ABSENT WIFE.

I miss thee more than words can tell;
My heart is filled with pain and woe;
My voice sounds like a funeral knell,
And grief is mine where'er I go.

Tears, bitter tears, bedew my cheek,
And weary sighs my bosom fill;
For, ah! I 've missed this long, long week,
The kisses which my soul would thrill.

In ceaseless toil I pass each day,
My dreams at night are all of thee;
I 've lost the power of being gay,
And only gloomy pictures see.

I wonder if the sky is blue,
And if the trees are robed in green;
If juleps are not made with rue,
And happy people e'er are seen.

Indeed, I feel that I have grown
Quite old since thou wert at my side;
'T is wrong to leave me thus alone,
For thou wast such a joy and pride.

Still, for thyself, my dear, I trust
Thou art enjoying every good;
So don't return until thou must,
Thou paragon of womanhood.

I have faith that the above lines will prove acceptable to my wife, and not hasten her return home.

SECOND FELICITY.

HOW I PASSED THE FOURTH OF JULY.

MY amiable wife is still visiting her estimable mother. Few husbands, situated as I am, would be able to sustain a wife's absence so well. Everybody knows that I was contented only when in her presence. When parted from her I sometimes grew irritable. Strange to say, I have not experienced an irritable moment since she left me. This is owing, I think, to the comet, which is said to draw bad humors from mankind. No one could have spent the FOURTH OF JULY more rationally than I did. Having been out quite late the night previous, in company with several merry companions who were disposed to be patriotic and joyful, I did not rise until a late hour of our national birthday. If it had not been for the noise of cannon and crackers firing around the neighborhood, I should have enjoyed my sleep.

On descending to the breakfast-room I concluded, by the high language which came up with the dumb-waiter containing my breakfast from the kitchen, that the cook was unusually cross. I think this class of individuals, as a general rule, are always more or less cross. Heat, I believe, induces crossness. As a usual thing I like my coffee hot: this morning it was cold. As I drank Congress-Spring water, however, on this occasion, it did not make much difference to me. I think eggs for breakfast should be boiled but one minute and a half: those the cook gave me on the Fourth would have answered for small cannon-balls. I judged she commenced boiling them about the time I came

home in the morning. Beefsteak, to be relished, should be tender and juicy; if it be as dry and hard as sole-leather, I don't think it is worth one's while to eat it. That which was placed before me seemed to be of the latter description. I sent for the cook to ask her why she had thus spoiled my breakfast. The cook refused to come, but said if I wished to see her I might go down to the kitchen. I did so. I found the cook standing in the centre of the room, with a rolling-pin in one hand and a long iron spoon in the other. I had never seen her before, and was somewhat struck by her appearance. She appeared to be a middle-aged woman, with a red face and a fiery disposition. She was short and crusty, but looked strong and wilful.

"Oh," I exclaimed, as I stood at the threshold of her empire, — for I don't think it a good plan to enter kitchens, — "are you the cook?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Well, why did n't you come to me when I sent for you?" I asked.

"Because," she answered, "I had orders from the mistress, before she went away, not to leave this floor until she returned home, and I intend to obey them."

"If you can't obey me," I said, "I don't wish you here any longer. I 'll pay you your month's wages, and you can go."

"I sha' n't leave this house," she replied, "till the mistress comes back. I promised her to stay here and cook for you, and I shall do it."

And she went on with her duties. I saw there was no use in arguing the matter with her, so I retreated up-stairs and left her to her kettles and pans.

I had no sooner got comfortably seated with the morning paper in my hand, than the cook sent to ask me if I would have dinner at the usual hour. As it was then nearly four o'clock, and I had but just finished my breakfast, I returned word that I would not; but would name nine o'clock

as a desirable hour. She sent back word that she would put off dinner until seven o'clock, but not a minute later.

As it was of small consequence to me at what hour I had it I made no objections. I passed half an hour reading the paper, and then, notwithstanding the din going on in the street, I fell asleep. I slept, I am happy to say, till I was called to dinner. I had a very nice dinner, and enjoyed it exceedingly. I drank my wife's health repeatedly, in a bottle of "Chateau Yquem"; and then, after taking another short nap, wondered if it would not be the proper thing to open another bottle of wine. I hesitated about doing so, however, because I do not enjoy drinking wine alone; but Heaven, which sends good wine, does not do so without providing mouths with which to drink it; and it was therefore a satisfaction to me to see just at that moment the burly form of my friend, Ned Cozzens, of West Point hospitality, enter the court-yard, We cracked a bottle of it immediately, and the *bouquet* which thereupon filled the room was redolent of Eden. It is not every one who knows how to drink good wine; you can't toss it off glass after glass as you may mugs of Taylor's October ale, — but you must linger lovingly, tenderly over it. Move your head slowly to and fro above the thin glass held up gingerly under your ruby nose, to catch all the *bouquet* which evolves itself from the amber-colored liquor. After you have fully inhaled its perfume in perfect silence, you can take one little sip of it. Those few drops must rest a moment on your tongue before you swallow them, which will give you an opportunity of ascertaining the flavor and quality of the wine. You then let it trickle slowly down your throat. You heave a little sigh, as if recalling all manner of bygone pleasures, and softly exclaim, Delicious! You then close one eye, and look knowingly with the other at your glass held up in the direction of the light. You speak, in well-chosen words and a subdued voice, of its color, its age, and its remarkable similarity to a wine your

father had in his cellar forty years ago. If your youthfulness will not permit you to date back as far as that, go as far as your memory or conscience will allow you. That wine of your father's, which, of course, he imported at a great cost specially for his own table, you will do well always to bear in remembrance. It will prove of inestimable benefit for you often to refer to it, and will obtain you many invitations to dinner-tables where are found good wines, which you would not otherwise have had.

You may now, having dilated at some length upon the subject of wines, finish your glass; and, if your companion is convivially inclined, extend it towards him to be refilled. If he should fill it, and if he be a good fellow he undoubtedly will, you may then rejoicingly sit down at a convenient table, with your friend opposite and the bottle between you, and finish the wine at your leisure, conversing meanwhile learnedly, jovially, and *con amore* on all pleasing things relating to wine, women, books, and works of art.

In some such way as this did my friend and myself pass a couple of hours delightfully together, and when he left me, after solemnly declaring that there was not a headache in a dozen bottles of such wine, I looked regretfully at the empty bottle, and wished that another friend would come that I might open another for him.

Then I ordered tea, and afterwards went upon the housetop, where I watched the sky-rockets shooting into the heavens from various parts of the city, and saw the stars come out, and the young moon go down, and quiet finally take the place of the noise and turmoil of the day.

I don't remember of ever having enjoyed a Fourth of July as well as this. If my wife and little ones had been home I should have undergone many severe trials. I might have blown myself up a thousand times with fire-crackers, and destroyed my wife with torpedoes, I have nothing more to say on the present occasion, except to add that if there be one thing I like more than another, it is to pass a Fourth of July as contentedly as I did the last.

THIRD FELICITY.

MY FRIEND THE GENERAL.

WHEN my esteemed friend the General, taking pity on my solitary state, — my wife still being absent, — invited me to his hospitable mansion up the Hudson to spend the night, I accepted his invitation, and in company with my friend the artist departed for this abode of peace and plenty. Before starting, however, we dined with the General at Delmonico's, where we ate our lamb and green peas, and drank our wine, as only those can who possess contented and happy dispositions.

We lingered over the mahogany so long that we nearly missed the train that was to carry us to our destination. In our haste to gain the cars we met with various mishaps. While the General walked along with the quick, resolute, and cautious step which is characteristic of an old soldier, and which induced the throng to move aside and let him pass, neither the artist nor myself were so successful in our movements. The former, who strode along at a two-forty pace, stepped on everybody's corns, and, with his maul-stick, which he always carries when he travels into strange countries, to use as a defensive or aggressive weapon, he knocked off everybody's hat. The individual whose corns he wounded limped away, after bestowing sundry uncomplimentary epithets upon the bearer of the maul-stick, and the hat-victims anathematized him to such a degree that the excommunications of all the popes Christendom has known, if employed on the same subject, would not have kept him farther from happiness. As for me, I covered

myself with candies and cakes, at almost the first step, by falling over an old woman's street-corner refreshment-stand. I gained my feet instantly, however, and before the proprietor of the stand could recover her astonishment and breath sufficiently to call for the police, I was lost in the crowd. Next I managed to upset a basket of oranges, the owner of which seized me, and would not let me go until I had paid for a dozen of them, which the newsboys stole as they rolled over the sidewalk. An Italian image-vender was the next sufferer; but he spoke English so unintelligibly, that, before he could make the crowd understand the fact that I had broken several crowned heads, and ruined sundry dancing-girls and a Greek slave, I was far distant from the scene of the disaster. I have a faint impression that I afterward damaged an organ that was playing "Dixie's Land," overturned a small boy clad in a Zouave uniform, and was run over myself by an Eighth Avenue rail-car, before I succeeded in reaching the Hudson River Railroad depot, where the General and the artist were impatiently waiting my coming. As the last car was leaving the station we succeeded in gaining it, and in finding seats on its sunny side.

Railroad travelling is very pleasant when there are no cinders or dust flying, and you are in no fear of being run into by other trains, or of running off the track. But then you must have either a pleasant companion to converse with, or an interesting book to read. It is desirable, too, to occupy the shady side of the car in summer-time, and to have your feet warm in winter. One cannot always have all one wishes, however; and on the present occasion, though I had pleasant company, one of them took a nap, and the other went into the smoking-car with a cigar, so I was left to my own resources. I tried to read; but the sun shone so brightly that it was almost impossible; besides, the newspaper which I bought, just as I jumped upon the car, proved to be three days old, and all the war

rumors which it contained had turned out to be false. I endeavored to enjoy the scenery; but the cinders soon filled my eyes and rendered sight-seeing impossible. To add to these disagreeabilities, I found, when the collector came around for the tickets, that I had lost mine, so I was obliged to pay my fare a second time, as collectors don't believe in lost tickets. A few days afterward I discovered the missing ticket under the lining inside my hat, where I had placed it for safety. If any poor fellow who is about going to Sing Sing, at the State's expense, would like to have a ticket to stick into his hatband, so as to make the passengers think he paid his own fare and was n't a prisoner, he can have mine by applying for it immediately. I afterward essayed to have the ticket-man of whom I bought it refund me the money; but he, after examining its date, said, laughingly, as if he thought it a clever joke, that my ticket was very much like fireworks, for it was n't good for much after the Fourth of July.

I have forgotten whether I said previously that my esteemed friend the General resides in Westchester county, not far from Sing Sing; at all events I say it now, and this fact will account for my ticket being marked for that place. It is not a very long ride from the city, so that by the time the artist had finished his cigar, the General ended his nap, and I relieved my eyes of the cinders which had fallen into them, we had glided past the walls of the prison, where so many sad hearts beat and dreary lives are lived, and alighted at the station in the village. Then we took a carriage and drove out to the General's place.

There seems to be considerable of a hill in this part of the country, and as we drove along, I kept wondering where the carriage would go to if the traces should break. I confess I was in a state of trepidation during the entire ride. I regarded the General as a most courageous man, and wondered if no accident had befallen him in the half century in which he had driven up and down that elevation.

I felt myself fully repaid, however, for the dangers I had encountered since I left the dinner-table at Delmonico's, when I arrived at the General's handsome home. As a gentleman who holds a facile pencil and a ready pen has, through the skill of the engraver and the art of the printer, given, in a recent number of the "London Art Journal," a view and description of my good friend's hospitable mansion, I will not attempt to describe that which he has so ably accomplished. Suffice for me to say that the General's home is an unpretentious building of white marble, quarried in the neighborhood, and Grecian in its style of architecture. A spacious hall, quite as large as any room in the house, was, to me, a most cheerful and attractive spot, — perhaps this was in some degree owing to the fact that on a table therein stood a goodly array of tall-necked bottles, and a silver punch-bowl of antique appearance.

On the walls of the parlor were valuable pictures, painted by such artists as Weir, Chapman, Doughty, Freeman, Mount, etc., — evidences of the refined taste of their owner. Here I saw, for the first time, the original of that picture which each Christmas-tide adorns the pictorial papers, and is so popular with good little boys and girls. I allude to Weir's "Visit of Santa Claus." Several fine old family-portraits, also, adorn various rooms, among which is one of the late Elkanah Watson, the philanthropist.

Notwithstanding we had partaken of a hearty dinner in the city, the General assured us that it would be opposed to his ideas of hospitality if we failed to eat another under his roof; and, as our appetites proved to be good, I think both the artist and myself did full justice to this second repast. After dinner the General conducted us about his grounds, and showed us several localities in the neighborhood of an historical character. He pointed out the tongue of land running into the river, off which the Vulture, that bore Major André to his fate, lay, while this gallant officer held his interview with Arnold. There, too, on the oppo-

site shore, was the spot where the meeting between the two took place, and still lower down the river was the place where the unfortunate soldier was executed. On our return to the house we brought out our chairs upon the piazza, and as the twilight deepened, and the river and hills beyond faded from sight, and only the stars were seen through the leafy trees around us, we talked of the present troubles of our country, and the General, with the ardor of youth, fought over again, in words, the battles he had been engaged in during the war of 1812. Although he takes no active part in the conflict of to-day, yet he stands ready to gird on his sword and lead again to battle the soldiers of liberty.

"Yes," he exclaimed, his form straightening and his eyes flashing with the fire and courage of youth, as he rose from his chair, "if my country desires my services, I am ready to take the field again, and, under the glorious Flag of our Union, fight until the death."

Hereupon the artist and myself cheered and clapped our hands and cried out, "Brave old soldier!" And the General, smiling, sunk back into his seat unconsciously beating the tattoo with his fingers on the arm of his chair, and repeating softly, "Yes, boys, I'd fight until death."

I felt, as I gazed on my brave old friend, that he had done more for his country than I could ever hope to accomplish. Not only had he served her with profit on the battle-field, but for fifteen years he had occupied a place in her councils, and, as congressional documents will show, acted with honor to himself and benefit to her.

"Ah!" I said to myself, "here is a man who will leave an honored name behind him. He has done much for his country, and deserves, and will receive, the thanks of all true patriots. I propose," I continued, speaking aloud, "that we go into the house and drink the General's health." And we went.

There is a champagne called the "Flower of Sparkling

Neckar," which is a noble wine, and just the kind with which no one could possibly object to drink another's health. Therefore when we entered the house, and saw this wine awaiting us, the artist and myself proceeded to toast the General, much to our satisfaction and none to his dismay.

Of this wine, some one who appreciates it has sung as follows: —

In the valley of the Neckar,
Where the blue tide sweeps along,
Lies a green and fertile vineyard,
And its vintage claims a song.

Many flowing goblets have I
Quaffed of wines both old and rare;
But not one that I have tasted
Can with this champagne compare.

If a poem were translated
Into shining beads of light,
It would wear the hue and semblance
Of the wine I sing to-night.

It is fruity, rich, and sparkling,
With a delicate bouquet,
Rosy-tinted, highly flavored,
Like the rare and famed Tokay.

With the "Flower of Sparkling Neckar"
I will henceforth toast the girls;
Merry, blue-eyed German lasses,
Laughing through their flaxen curls,

And the happy Yankee maidens,
In New England's favored clime,
With the dark-haired Southern beauties,
'Midst the orange and the lime.

Then, on gay and festal moments
When I quaff a regal wine,
Give me in a foaming goblet
Neckar champagne pure and fine.

After the wine had been disposed of amidst genial talk, and the night had passed the other side of the twelve, the General, giving us our candles, ordered us to bed, and we, as obedient soldiers should, retired in good order.

The next morning, after a hearty breakfast, we bade a cordial adieu to our host, while yet the dew was on the grass and the birds were singing their matin songs, and once more getting into the cars, were rapidly whirled back to the city.

When I wrote to my wife and told her where I had been, she answered that she was glad to hear of it; for if there were one thing she liked more than another, it was to have me associate with persons wiser and better than myself. If that be so, I think she had better return home.

IS IT A FELICITY OR AN INFELICITY?

SOMEBODY IS RESPONSIBLE.

IF my esteemed wife were only at home, she would doubtless be able to solve the question asked above; but as she still remains with her mother in the country, I am, perforce of circumstances, a perplexed man. My perplexity originated through an occurrence of which it is my purpose to speak in this sketch. To say that I have been kept awake nights by the event to which I allude, is literally true. My mind and patience have been exercised to a remarkable degree by this untoward circumstance. I think this event would agitate and aggravate less nervous and more even-tempered men than myself, were they in my position. I don't know what the world will say to it; but I trust that they will exonerate me, however, from all blame in the matter. Some persons will doubtless laugh at it; but I will assure such it is no laughing matter. Others will look grave and shake their heads and exclaim, "Who 'd have thought it?" I can honestly assure them that I for one would not. Others there will be who will say that they fully expected such a thing would happen, and it serves me right for allowing my wife to leave me and go to visit her mother. Then, again, what will my wife say when she comes to hear of it. I fairly tremble when I think of the way in which she will go on about it. If we ever live together after this, I can make up my mind to having this little occurrence constantly thrown into my face. The knowledge I possess of my own innocence will, I think, enable me to bear all the obloquy

which will be cast upon me; but still the matter will be far from pleasant.

The circumstances of the unfortunate case to which I refer are simply these. About midnight on the thirty-first of July, being my birthday, I was aroused from my sleep by a violent ringing of the street-door bell. My first impression was that my wife had come home, and, it being a rainy night, was exceedingly anxious to get into the house.

"She suddenly recalled to her mind this morning," I said to myself, as I hurried on my clothes, "that this was my birthday, and, affectionate wife that she is, has hastened on the wings of love and the railroad, to congratulate me on having turned another leaf in the book of life."

Again the bell rung still more violently than before.

"I am coming, my dear," I exclaimed, as I deliberately selected a clean collar to put on, for I would not have my wife see me on my birthday without my being neatly attired. Then, after having sprinkled a drop or two of cologne on my handkerchief, I went to the door.

To my surprise I found, when I opened it, no one there. The wind blew a shower of rain into my face, and extinguished the light I carried in my hand. I was on the point of turning and closing the door, when a slight noise at my feet arrested me. I looked down and saw a covered basket, from which a wailing sound issued. I took the basket into the hall, and, lighting the gas, opened it carefully. I don't remember of ever seeing a handsomer infant than that which gazed at me with its blue eyes from the basket.

But I was in a quandary. No sooner, however, did I realize the state of the case, than I rushed to the door, and, opening it, looked eagerly up and down the street. The gas-lights gleamed upon the wet pavements, and the branches of the trees threw dancing shadows across them, as the wind swayed them to and fro. Opposite to my house is an open lot of ground surrounded by a board fence. As I gazed across the way I thought I could trace the form of

a person leaning against the fence, watching my movements.

"Halloo!" I shouted; "come back and get your baby. I don't know what to do with it, and in fact I don't want it."

But no answer was returned, and the form I was watching sunk gradually down and finally disappeared from my sight. I stepped rapidly and quietly across the street, and looking over the fence, saw a woman clad in a long cloak crouched on the ground before me. Ere I could climb the fence she saw me, and with a bound and a cry of terror she sprang to her feet, and vanished among the trees which grow within the enclosure.

Then I returned to the house and wondered what I should do with the infant. I was entirely alone, for the cook had gone to sit up with a sick cousin, and therefore I was cast solely upon my own resources. I thought I would call the ladies in the next house to my assistance; but the idea of rousing them in the middle of the night to say that I had a baby left with me and wanted their assistance, was rather too much for even a man of my courage to undertake. Ten to one, I thought, when I tell them of the difficulty I am in, if they will be willing to assist me. The two old maids who live on my right hand would doubtless think it an awful thing, and would no more touch the baby than they would do anything of a compromising character. They believe me to be a shocking man at the best of times, when my wife is at home, and never call upon her if they think they may encounter me. I doubt, had I asked them, if they would have responded to my invitation. As for my left-hand neighbors, they are Germans and don't understand a word of English, and I feared I would never be able to make them comprehend the true state of the case. While these and similar thoughts passed through my mind, the infant remained so quiet, gazing at the gas-light, that I concluded to take care

of it myself until morning, and then hand it over to the police.

So I got out the cradle from the store-room, where it had been lying idle for two or three years past, and put my waif into it, expecting it would go immediately to sleep. It was a wide-awake infant, however, and had no idea of carrying out my wishes. So long as I rocked it, it remained quiet; but the moment I ceased, it commenced crying. Then I thought it might be hungry, so I warmed some milk and tried to feed it with a spoon. I came very near strangling it to death several times, and had to beat it on its back to bring it to. Then I put it into the cradle, and rocked it, but it would n't go to sleep, and cried heartily the moment I ceased the motion. Then I took it up and walked with it, just as I remembered to have done with my own little one a few years back. So long as I walked it about, it was quiet as a lamb; but, let me stop, even for a moment, and it cried with all its lungs. Then, for a change, I trotted it on my knees, and sung nursery songs to it. It seemed to possess a good ear for music, and crowed and doubled up its fists in a wonderfully approving style as I sung. But it cried lustily when I stopped, and I thought to myself my maiden friends in the next house must hear it, and will wonder and be terribly shocked at my proceedings. I confess I had a hard night of it, for there were various little matters connected with the charge of an infant in which I was not posted and could n't think of undertaking. I made up my mind during the night that, if we both lived until morning, we would have nothing more to do with each other. Among other difficulties with which it was afflicted, were hiccoughs, colic, pins, mosquitoes, *et cætera.*

I was very glad when the morning, and the cook, who appeared about the same time, came. If there ever were an astonished woman, the cook was one. She did n't ask many questions, and I did n't say much to her; but she

regarded me in a manner that seemed to declare she was not altogether satisfied with the account I gave of the baby's arrival. I will do the cook the justice of saying that she remarked the "take in"—for thus she persisted in calling the baby—had blue eyes and red hair, which no one could say I possessed.

Under the cook's motherly care, the baby soon went to sleep, and I availed myself of the stillness to take a nap myself.

When I awoke, a couple of hours afterward, the infant was still sleeping, and the cook declared it to be the prettiest child she had ever seen. I told her it was my intention to let the proper authorities take it, for that I could not undertake the charge of it; besides, what would my wife say, when she came home, to find a strange baby in the house.

"Wait," said the cook, "for a few days at least, before you send it away. Perhaps we may discover its parents, and it may turn out to be stolen from some loving mother. At all events," she continued, "I will take charge of it for a short time."

And so, for ten days, has the "take in" been cared for by the cook and myself. What final course will be adopted in regard to it, remains to be seen. In the mean time my wife must be informed of the matter; but if there be one thing I dislike more than another, it is being obliged to write to her that a strange baby has been left at the house in her absence.

NINETEENTH INFELICITY.

MY WIFE RETURNS HOME.

AFTER a long absence, my estimable wife has returned home. I almost despaired of ever seeing her again, when, one gusty November night, just as a party of my ancient friends who were filling, for the third time, their slender goblets with sparkling Golden Wedding wine around my hospitable mahogany, an ominous ring at the door-bell startled us into sobriety and propriety. The Colonel, being a married man, was the first to detect the connubial tone of the bell, and rising hastily, said he believed he had an engagement which he must hasten to fulfil, and therefore begged me to excuse him. He had just finished singing a song, in which he had repeatedly declared that he had no intention of going home until morning, and his sudden desire to be going now rather surprised us. The Major, who imitates the Colonel in his movements, immediately declared that he, too, had an engagement; but the Captain, with a disregard of rank which was pleasing to observe, ordered his two superiors to sit down, and not run away while such enemies — pointing to the tall flasks before him — were in the field.

Perhaps it will be quite as well to state that quite a number of my acquaintances have recently become distinguished military characters, — at least, not a few of them are celebrated for the inordinate amount of gold braid which ornaments their clothes and the costly swords they carry. I have not yet heard that any of their swords have been baptized in blood, or their gold lace tarnished through exposure to camp-life. But I presume all this will come

by-and-by; in the meanwhile, they add to the brilliant appearance of Broadway, and are much employed as escorts at military funerals, and take an active part in the reception of New-England troops, passing through the city on their way to the seat of war. I don't wish to be understood as saying that my three friends above-mentioned won't march down to Dixie as soon as their regiment obtains its complement of men, but I will simply declare that their ranks are a most unaccountable time in filling up. One day the Colonel will tell me that he wants less than two hundred men to fill his regiment; but when I see him, perhaps a week or two afterwards, he has five or six hundred to obtain. When I question him as to where his men have gone, he says government has taken them away from him, and drafted them into other regiments. Of course this must be so, and the slander which the newspapers have cast upon some of the colonels, that they sell their men at so much per head to other regiments, cannot apply to my friend the Colonel. It has just occurred to me that this is an unnecessary hiatus in my narrative, and while I am dotting it down, my wife is standing outside the front-door, shivering with cold, and anxious to be admitted within.

At the moment the bell was rung the third time, my friends all apparently understood who was coming, for they seized their coats and caps, declaring that it was getting late, and they thought they had better be going. They encountered my wife in the hall, who glared at them significantly, and said she trusted her unexpected return had not frightened them away.

The Colonel, who is a very polite man, expressed his regrets at being obliged to depart at the moment, he said, bowing, when so charming an addition was about to be made to their society. He trusted, though, that before he left for the seat of war he should have the pleasure of paying his respects to her, and renew the acquaintance he so

happily formed with her last winter at one of the artists' receptions.

Whether it was this flattering speech of the Colonel's, or the sight of the gold lace and gilt buttons which covered his manly form, which soothed my wife's feelings, I cannot positively declare; but, at all events, when, with me, she entered the room where the table still stood, she did not denounce my visitors, as I had expected she would. She did ask, though, why I had selected the parlor for the scene of my festivities, and said that the tobacco-smoke which filled the room would impregnate her satin window-curtains all winter. She wondered, too, how I could permit my friends to spill their wine on the carpet, and thought it singular that I should allow them to throw their cigar-stumps into the corners of the room. Then again she wished to know why I had selected my companions from the military; formerly, she continued, artists and literary men were your friends, and she thought them much more refined than soldiers.

"Oh, my dear," I replied, "I have not changed my friends, they have only changed their occupation; painters and authors can't live by their calling nowadays, so they have been obliged to gird on their swords and shoulder their muskets to enable them to sustain existence."

"Oh!" exclaimed my wife, doubtingly.

"Yes," I answered; "did n't you recognize the gentlemen whom you passed in the hall?"

"No!" she replied; "they were as strange to me as if they had been Indians."

"Well, the Colonel," I said, "you have only met once before; but the Major is our old friend Potter, the author of 'Chivalry and Beauty,' and, as you are aware, a poet of some merit. The Captain — the one in the red, baggy trousers — is the celebrated artist Mr. Splinter, who painted the great historical picture, 'The Murder of the Noisy Children, by command of Herod.' Splinter, you know, is

a bachelor, and dislikes children with all his soul. He joined the Zouave regiment on account of the picturesqueness of the uniform,"

"Pray, who," asked my wife, "is the gray-bearded man, with the long cane surmounted with a silver knob as large as his own head?"

"Ha, ha!" I shouted. "Didn't you recognize him? Why, he is our musical friend the composer, who used to play the organ occasionally at St. Jerome's Church. He is a drum-major now, and that was his baton of office, which you presumed to be a cane."

"Well, I must say," said my wife, "that your friends are strangely metamorphosed since I saw them last, and to think that these changes have all been occasioned by the war is very sad."

"Now, my dear," I said, "tell me something about yourself and the children. How have the little ones been, and why did you not bring them home with you?"

"Because," my wife answered, "I understood that you had a new claimant for your affections, in the person of a babe left here some weeks ago, under mysterious circumstances, and concerning which you have never written me a word. I don't know"—and here my wife drew forth her handkerchief—"what I have done to warrant such treatment from you. If I had not been a loving, obedient, faithful wife, I might have expected you would introduce a strange baby into the house; but, under the circumstances, I must say that the bringing of that child here was a liberty which was unwarrantable;" and my wife leaned back in her chair, and covered her face with her handkerchief.

"But, my dear," I said, apologetically, "I did n't introduce the child here; it was left by a woman whom I do not know, and whom, I assure you, I never saw except on that occasion."

"Oh, yes, that is just what you men always say," she

replied; "but why did n't you write to me about it, and not leave it for gossiping neighbors to inform me?"

"Well, the truth is," I replied, "I really forgot all about it. I believe the child is still in the house; but I am not certain. I took charge of it, as well as I knew how, the first night of its arrival, but since then the cook, who conceived a fancy to it, has had the entire control of it. I believe she has discovered who its parents are, and, doubtless, will be able to give you all the information on that point which you desire."

"If this be so, my dear husband," she said, "it is a load taken off my heart, for I received a terrible shock when I heard from the ancient ladies next door, who wrote me that they were kept awake nights by a crying babe in our house, and that they had seen it, and it looked exactly like" —

"Like who?" I interrupted.

"Well, they did n't name any one, my dear," my wife answered; "they simply put a dash instead."

"Leaving you to imagine," I added, "that they meant me."

"Undoubtedly," said my wife.

"Well," I said, "it is rather late to test the matter to-night, but to-morrow you can see and judge for yourself. Do you know, my dear," I added, "that you have been away from me several months, and you must not be surprised if I have, unintentionally, adopted some of my former bachelor habits. I go to the play, I attend little suppers, I indulge in a pipe, I keep a dog and a night-key."

"Give yourself no uneasiness about them," my wife kindly said; "it will not take me long to eradicate such habits in you, and, as there is no time like the present in which to begin a reformation, suppose you hand to me your pipe and night-key."

"Certainly," I replied; and without hesitation I gave into her keeping my meerschaum and key.

"Now," she said, "as it is quite late, and I am weary from my day's journey, suppose you turn out the gas, and we will go to our room. To-morrow we will see the baby, and decide as to what we shall do with it."

And we went.

TWENTIETH INFELICITY.

OVER OUR COFFEE.

"NOW, my dear," I said to the estimable lady who presided for the first time in several months at the coffee-urn end of the breakfast-table, "allow me to mention an improvement in the manner of preparing a cup of coffee, which I discovered by experiments made during your absence. Not but that your way is very good, my love, but I think mine better."

"Oh, of course!" said my wife, shaking back the ribbons of her morning-cap in an unnecessarily defiant manner; "of course," she repeated, "I have no objections to learning how to prepare a cup of coffee, notwithstanding I have made it in accordance with the receipt my dear mother gave me fifteen years ago, ever since we have been married, and never until to-day heard you complain of it."

"But I don't complain of it," I answered; "I simply asked you to allow me to tell you how I made it during your absence. I don't even ask you to adopt my mode. Will you hear me?"

"Well, I suppose I must," she replied; "but don't flatter yourself that I shall feel under any obligations to discard my present way of making it. My father always said he never wished better coffee than that my mother prepared, — he was very particular in regard to his coffee, — and I make it exactly as she did. But let me hear your mode."

"Well, in the first place," I said, "after the coffee is nicely roasted, I soak overnight as much as I wish to use for my breakfast — say half a pound for two cups — in as much brandy as will cover it."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed my wife.

"Don't interrupt me, if you please," I said. "Then, in the morning, I pound it in a mahogany mortar, which I bought expressly for the purpose, and only use for my coffee, till each berry is finely mashed, and the entire mass has become paste-like in its character."

"Allow me to ask," said my wife, "how long is it necessary to pound it before its paste-like character is attained?"

"Well, from twenty to thirty minutes," I replied.

My wife cast up her hands in astonishment.

"If it prove too dry," I continued, "add more brandy."

"Would n't whiskey answer?" asked my wife, in a sarcastic tone of voice.

"Perhaps it would," I replied. "I have occasionally thrown a few lumps of loaf-sugar into the mortar, which has the effect of clarifying the coffee. Then I place the pounded mass into an earthen coffee-pot, and pour upon it a cupfull of boiling water. After it has steeped for about ten minutes, I add the balance of water necessary, and in five minutes thereafter it is ready for the table."

"Really," my wife exclaimed, as I concluded my account, "it may be a very excellent mode, but it certainly is expensive, to say nothing of the time consumed in making it. Any day, however, that you may like to make it in that way yourself, I will not object; but, for my part, I think the usual mode is the better."

"Let me tell you, my dear, that coffee made in this way is very healthy. The cook says that she and the strange babe have grown fat on it."

"Indeed!" ejaculated my wife; "and that reminds me that I have seen the babe, and don't wonder that the cook took such a liking to it. It is a very pretty child, and, do you know, I think I can tell whose it is."

"No!" I answered, half trembling lest my good name should in some unaccountable manner become involved in the matter.

"Why, the moment I looked at it, I recognized the resemblance it bore to the poor woman who used to help Katy in the washings, and whose husband, you know, belongs to the Sixty-Ninth Regiment. Indeed, the cook said she knew it was hers, and added that the mother comes here nearly every day to see it. Old Sallie says, moreover, she suspected it from the first; and when the poor woman came to the house a few days after the child was left here, and observed the little one lying so comfortably in its cradle, she fairly wept for joy, and acknowledged that she was its mother. The little babe's father, she said, was away to the wars, and he had n't sent her a single cent since he left her, and she was obliged to go out to day's work to enable her to get money enough to live on, and if she kept the baby with her she could n't do it; so she said, sobbing, 'I thought that as the missus here was away from home, and I knew you,' meaning the cook, 'was a kind-hearted body, that ye 'd keep the little one till I could get means to take care of it meself; and 't is I, Biddy McGuire, that will ask the Holy Vargin, who knows what it is to be a mother, to bless ye, and always keep the pots a-bilin' when ye 've got a nice dinner to get for the gentleman above-stairs.'"

"I am very glad," I said, "to learn the truth of the matter. To be frank, my dear, it has annoyed me not a little, for one's neighbors are so censorious and given to gossip, that I could n't tell what they might say about it. It will be better, however, for the mother to take the child home with her than to leave her here any longer. If she needs assistance, why you can help her, and I have no doubt her husband will send her money before long."

"Very well," my wife answered; "if she comes here today, I will see in regard to it."

"Do so," I replied; "and now if you will give me another cup of coffee, I will thank you. While I don't wish to disparage my own coffee, I will say this for yours, that I have never drank any made in this manner which I like better."

"I am glad you are pleased with it," she replied; "but I could make much superior coffee if I had a new urn. You half-promised me once to take me down to Burling Slip, to your old friend Mr. Hart's, where I could select one of his make."

"Very well," I said; "you may go there any time you like, and I dare say you will find one there that will please even your fastidious taste."

"It would be so nice," my wife remarked, "to have an entire silver-plated service on our table at Thanksgiving-time, which, you know, will be here in a few days."

"It would indeed, my dear, be very nice, as you say," I replied; "but I really don't see how I can afford it. The times are so hard now, and I am making so little money, that we must live very economically till the prospects are fairer."

"Certainly," my wife answered, "I am ready to economize in any way you may suggest, if by so doing I can get a set of silver. For instance, I might give up drinking tea and you coffee. Your way of making it costs about fifty cents a cup, and if our entire household should drink their usual proportion of it, it would come to about two dollars a day, which would amount, in the course of the year, to seven hundred dollars. Quite an item, you will allow, in the yearly expenses, and which, if saved, would enable us to purchase some very handsome solid silver table articles; but for my part, I would be contented with a heavily plated service."

"But if we must give up coffee and tea to obtain them, what would be the use of having them at all? If you don't intend to use your coffee-urn or teapot, I see no reason for getting them."

"Oh!" exclaimed my wife, evidently overwhelmed; "but — but" —

"I don't see it," I said.

"Well, if we had company, you know," she continued,

after a pause, "why then it would be necessary to have both tea and coffee. And, perhaps, we might give up some other luxury."

"New bonnets, for instance?" I suggested.

"Well, no; I could n't very well do without a bonnet," she said; "but there are other articles which we might do without."

"What?" I asked.

"Cigars, wines, and costly dinners."

"Certainly," I replied; "anything else?"

"Let me think a moment," she said. "Oh, you talk about getting a new overcoat; don't you think your old one will answer, if it has new buttons and is carefully repaired?"

"Why, of course it will," I replied: "what a suggestive mind you possess. Now is there nothing else?"

"No!" said my wife, thoughtfully, "I think that is all that will be necessary; but if more be required, I will give up my usual box of gloves on Christmas, and only buy a pair at a time as I may want them."

"Very well," I said. "I see nothing in the way, then, to prevent you from getting the silver as soon as you can lay by sufficient money to purchase it with. And now, I must be off to business. Good-bye, my dear."

And kissing my wife on both cheeks, I hastily departed, leaving her slightly astonished, and wondering when she should be able to make her little investment in silver ware.

FOURTH FELICITY.

PEACE AT LAST.

DO you know, my dear," I said to the fair woman who has the misfortune to be my wife, as we sat together in the library the other evening, — it chanced to be the anniversary of our marriage, — "that I have been thinking recently, and especially was it in my thoughts during your visit to your mother, that you really might have obtained a better husband than you did?"

"Oh, as for that," she replied, "I made up my mind to that effect years ago; in fact, we had n't been married a month before I discovered the mistake I had made. But, as it was too late then to make any change, I resolved to make the best of the husband I had obtained. Now there was Charley" —

"Never mind, my dear," I interposed, "about reviving the names of any of your old beaux. I don't wish to hear aught about them; and as they are all either dead and buried, or married, which amounts to about the same thing — the less said in relation to them the better."

"Well, I don't know about that either," she answered; "there are such things in this world as divorces, and, moreover, there are such persons as widowers. My old friend, Dr. Brown, whom I knew long before I ever met you, is a widower; and Parson Hill is another; and Judge" —

"Yes, yes," I cried, "I know them very well; their wives, let me tell you, died of broken hearts, from the effects of their ill-treatment. Butchers, my love, could not be more savage and cruel to innocent lambs, than they

were to their wives. It 's a fact, and the whole neighborhood, as you know, used to talk about their inhuman treatment."

"I must say, on the contrary," said the obstinate little woman, "that I never heard a whisper breathed against their kindness and tenderness. Why, just look at the beautiful monuments they have erected over their wives' graves, and the lovely poetry inscribed upon them!"

"Hum!" I exclaimed, "that is an easy thing to do; but it don't follow that, because one erects a monument a hundred feet high over his buried wife, that he loved her a hundred-fold better than he who simply plants a rose-bush at the head of his darling's grave. It is almost proverbial, too, that epitaphs never tell the truth; and if you should die, my dear, though I would mourn for you very sincerely, I do not believe that I would place more than a simple slab above your grave, inscribed with your name and age."

"Of course you would n't," my wife exclaimed, the tears rising to her eyes; "it would be as much as I could expect, if you were to give me even a decent burial, — leaving the matter of a monument or tombstone entirely out of the question."

"Pshaw! my dear," I replied; "is there any use in your talking that way, I should like to know? In the first place, your health is perfectly good, and" —

"My health good!" she interrupted. "Why there never was a more feeble woman than I am. You know how weak and ill I have been ever since we were married, and that I am liable to die any moment. But you are used to hearing me say so, and seeing me in this condition. My mother knows how precarious my life is, and she told me, the very hour before I started to come home, that I must be very careful of myself; that I must not entertain too much company, — especially your bachelor friends; for that my life hung on a thread, and that I might die any moment."

"Good Heavens!" I exclaimed, "if there be one thing more than another which I dislike, it is for your mother to tell you that you are feeble. To my certain knowledge, she has repeated those identical words to you at least fifty times every year since we were married, and I believe she only does it to frighten you, and provoke me."

"Well, you are cruel, cruel as the grave," my wife cried, now quite excited; "and I 'll no longer live under the same house with one who has no more consideration for my feelings and happiness than you have. My dear mother, who has only her child's welfare at heart, can't give me any advice but you get angry at her for it."

"I don't get angry at her," I replied. "I am only vexed at her for trying to create a disturbance between us. If she 'd let you and I manage our own household, without forever suggesting this or that to you, we should know more peaceful days than we do.

"I 'll tell you what, my dear," I continued, after a pause, during which my wife had kept her handkerchief to her eyes, in a way that suggested weeping, — "I 'll tell you what," I repeated, "I had further been thinking about during your absence, and, if I am not greatly mistaken, it will be conducive of peace in our home."

My wife removed the handkerchief from her eyes, and asked me what I meant.

"I mean this, my dear," I answered: "I purpose to remove from the city into the country. I believe that thereby your health will be greatly improved, the fresh air will, I doubt not, bring back the roses to your cheeks, and the quiet incident to a country life, together with the tender communings which our hearts will hold with nature, will bring peace to us at last. Besides," I said, "the temptations which assail us both in the city, will not exist to the same extent in the country. There are no Stewarts with their marble dry-goods stores in the country to tempt you into going a-shopping. There are no Tillmans, with Parisian

bonnets, to make you distracted three or four times a year after a new hat; everybody, — that is every female body, — in the country, wears sun-bonnets, made of pasteboard and calico, neat and tasteful affairs, which they make themselves. The opera is an unknown institution; but you can hear better music without price, if you will only rise betimes in the morning, and, opening your chamber-window, listen to the songs the birds sing amidst the swaying branches. Early rising, too, is conducive to health, and a ramble through the woods is better than a promenade on the fashionable side of Broadway. Again, the cost of living in the country is half of what it is in the city. The rents bear no comparison to city rents, and we can enjoy the fresh vegetables just out of our own garden, which is more than we can say of those from Washington Market. The children! ah, my dear, think of the children! How they will improve by a change from town to country. They will have plenty of good milk, and lots of currants, and roses, and apples, and nuts, and all those kind of things. They will grow fat, and sunburnt, and freckled, and tear their clothes climbing trees, and generally have a good time of it; and then it will be so nice for me to have my bachelor friends come out to see me, and we can give them fresh eggs, and strawberries and cream, and — oh, if there be one thing I like more than another, it will be to live in the country with you and ours."

I suppose my wife was too overjoyed to speak; so she only nodded her head acquiescently smiled, half sadly, and looked forth into the deepening twilight, while I moved nearer towards her and clasped her hand in mine.

And so, when winter had glided by, May came, we went into the country, where, undisturbed by city trials, we have found peace at last, and all manner of agreeable matrimonial felicities.

MY NEIGHBORS.

I.

JACK POTTS AND WIFE NEW-YEAR'S MORNING.

TO appreciate the value of kind neighbors, and to realize the pestiferousness of evil disposed ones, it is necessary to reside either in the country or in a small village. In the city there exists no such race of beings as neighbors. A city neighbor would be an anomaly. The persons who may chance to dwell for a year or two in the house adjoining yours, are never anything more to you than "the family that lives next door." Whether they be Christians or Jews is to you a matter of almost perfect indifference. As long as they do not throw their Croton over your door-steps, nor place their ash-boxes on your twenty-five feet front, you are contented. They may have a houseful of young ladies, who take turns in thrumming on the piano all day, or as many gentlemen boarders, who practise blowing on French-horns and key-bugles all night; but you never think of interfering with their occupations, and asking them to put away their pianos and French-horns. You simply regard the matter as a nuisance, but one which you are obliged to tolerate. In the country, however, neighbors are neighbors, — whether they dwell next door, or over the way, or around the corner. For my own part, I have lots of neighbors who live round about. Of course my home is not in the city: no, I reside in a little, lopsided town, built on the sunniest slope

of a hill, and striving hard to extend itself over on the other side; but, as yet, all of its efforts have proved unsuccessful, and only half a dozen rickety, wooden houses have gone up on its northern declivity.

The name of this little town, though not inscribed on any map, is, however, very well known to its inhabitants; and is even taught by most of its school-madams to their pupils of tenderest years. It is said, though with how much truth I cannot tell, that when once these children have learned the same by heart, they never forget it. If this be so, it speaks well for the ability displayed by these juveniles of Lollipop. Lollipop is the name of the town. There are a good many honest people in Lollipop besides my neighbors round about; but as it is only the latter of whom I desire to speak, I will not excite the vanity of the others, by recording in this account of my own neighbors, any of the wonderful deeds the former have either done or contemplate some day doing.

Being a bachelor, and living in chambers, my nearest neighbors, of course, are those who occupy the adjoining apartment. It is of these whom I feel in duty bound first to speak. Being married each to the other, they are regarded by their friends generally as essentially one party, but I have discovered, from my closer proximity to them, that they mutually regard each other as separate and independent beings. His name is John, familiarly called by his intimate associates Jack Potts. His wife's name is Deborah, which he shortens into Deb or Debby, when coming the affectionate. They are an ill-matched couple, both in regard to size and disposition. Jack is short and thick, and Deb tall and slender. Jack is full of jokes and good-nature; Deb overflows with bile and ill-humor. Jack performs all the laughing; Deb all the scolding. The partition wall between our rooms is very thin, — remarkably so, I think, — and in consequence I overhear much of their conversation, which, I am inclined to believe, was never in-

tended for my ears. To confess the truth, their conversations have prejudiced me against the institution of matrimony. Their case may be an exception, — I trust it is; but it strikes me that the holy estate of matrimony, viewed from my point of view, and seen, as exemplified in the daily life of Mr. and Mrs. John Potts, is an estate which I prefer rather to avoid than enter. I am decidedly a man of a mild and social disposition, and possessed, even, of a religious turn of mind. It is, therefore, with a feeling of great regret, accompanied, moreover, with some fear, that I listen to the almost daily bickerings and contentions of my neighbors in the next room. I have sometimes thought that I would gently rap on the partition wall, and politely desire them to cease their strife, but actually I have been afraid to do so. Not, however, through fear of Jack, but of Mrs. Deborah. Therefore I have, wisely I think, held my peace, and contented myself by sending to them through the post-office sundry tracts and printed sermons of a peace-promoting character. One tract I remember in particular, which I thought appropriate, was entitled "Little children, love one another." I have also published in the "Ladies' Wreath" various articles headed "Household Warfare." In these papers I alluded very plainly to the case under consideration, but without, I am sorry to say, effecting any good result. I now propose to state the case still more plainly, and let the public hear the conversation which occurred between Mr. and Mrs. Potts

ON NEW-YEAR'S MORNING.

On that morning, while I still was in bed, I overheard John say to his wife that he had concluded to make a few calls on his acquaintances.

"That will be," exclaimed Deborah, "a fine thing for you to do, Mr. Potts; yes, you had better go and leave your precious wife all alone on this first day of the new year, with not a soul to comfort her, and the children gone to their grandmother's."

"But, my dear," said Jack, in a lively tone, "you can sit up for callers yourself."

"Sit up, indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. P.; "and how many callers do you imagine that I would be likely to have? Not one, except that odious, long-legged fellow in the next room, and he 'll be certain to come poking in on me, with his nasty pipe in his mouth, about dinner-time."

I was "that odious, long-legged fellow in the next room" referred to, and I immediately resolved not to trouble Mrs. Potts in the way of which she had spoken.

"Well, but, my dear," remarked Jack, "you need not speak so loud, or our neighbor will be certain to hear you, and get angry, and then, I should like to know, who will bring home peanuts and candies to the children?"

"Oh, yes, stick up for him, do! It 's no matter, I suppose, if he does puff his dirty tobacco-smoke into your dear, suffering wife's eyes and throat, till she 's almost dead! No, I must bear it, because he once gave the children a few cents' worth of candy; and did n't they stick themselves all up with it, and daub the door-knobs, which caused you to swear, Mr. Potts, when you took hold of them; and was n't Phœbe Jane sick for two weeks after eating the mussy stuff!"

"But," said John, "Phœbe Jane was ill of the measles, and not from eating candy."

"Well, but you know yourself, Potts that I always said — and I 'll say it to my dying day, which can't be far off, for I feel my constitution breaking up — that the measles was brought to Phœbe Jane in the paper around the candy."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Jack, laughing.

"Very well, you may say nonsense, and laugh at me if you like, but I know it was so; else why did n't the other children have it?"

John replied "that he did not know why."

"Of course you don't, said Mrs. P.; "but I do. It was

because none of the other children played with that piece of paper."

This was evidently a poser, and John made no reply, but proceeded to blacken his boots, brushing away with great energy. Mrs. Potts, too, paused to take breath.

"Oh, you need n't," at last she exclaimed, — and I distinctly heard her turn over in bed, so as to obtain a better view of her liege lord, — "you need n't," she repeated, "take so much pains in blacking those boots: they look plenty good enough to stay at home in, and it is n't likely that any one but myself will see them."

"The greater reason, then, my dear, why I should take extra pains with them. I always like, you know, to appear well before you. Do you know, old girl," — and Jack stopped brushing, and looked up over his spectacles at his wife, — "that I came very near to buying a pair of patent-leather boots, to go to church in with you on Sundays?"

Mrs. Potts said she did not — and requested him not to address her as "old girl" again, for that she would n't put up with it. Then, after a pause, she added, "I trust you won't be such a fool, Potts, as to buy such kind of boots in these hard times."

"To wear other than on Sundays," said Jack, "and in your company, of course not; but on the Sabbath, when I go to church, accompanied by you and our five children, I feel as if I were walking on gold dust, and nothing was too good for me to wear."

"And I feel," chimed in Mrs. P., "as if I were walking on eggs, for I 'm so afraid that the children will tumble down and soil their clean clothes."

Thereupon Jack, who had finished his boots, commenced humming "Old Hundred," while he walked the chamber, opening and closing drawers as if in search of something, till at last I heard him turn a key in its lock, when Mrs. Potts immediately shouted, "There, now, John, you need n't go to that closet, for you won't find your vest there, if that 's

what you're looking for. You 'll only tumble up my dresses and make me trouble, without doing yourself any good. There, you 're mussing my brocade. I can tell by the rustling it makes. You 're the meanest man, Potts" — but I lost the remainder of Mrs. P.'s remark through Jack's shouting aloud, "Here it is; I've found it!" And then I heard Mrs. Potts rise quickly from bed, and hastily close the closet-door and lock it, while Jack remained on the inside.

"I 'll teach you," I heard Mrs. P. say, as she returned to bed, "to rummage among my dresses."

For a few moments all was quiet; at length Jack knocked on the door of his prison. Mrs. Potts said not a word. Jack knocked again; still no reply from Mrs. P. "Come, my dear, Jack said, in coaxing tones, "unlock the door — you've carried the joke far enough." But Mrs. Deborah still remained silent. "If you don't, Mrs. Potts," Jack cried, after a pause, "I 'll pull down all your dresses."

"Do if you dare," cried the excellent Mrs. P. "Oh, you mean wretch you!" she added, as by the rustling of the dresses she discovered that he was putting his threat into execution. "Now, I 'll never unlock the door for you." Then another pause followed, — of short duration, however, — and the warlike Jack kicked open the door, and marched forth arrayed in his white vest, and with Mrs. P.'s best bonnet, which had fallen from its hook, on the top of his head.

Mrs. Potts groaned, and said, "My sweet little bonnet!"

The mean man threw it at her.

"Now that you've got your white vest, Mr. Potts, I suppose you 're satisfied?"

Mr. Potts said that he was.

"A pretty state you and your white vest will be in when night comes," cried Deborah.

Jack grunted out, "Humph!"

Mrs. Potts, anxious for the last word, said "Humph indeed!"

And then the incorrigible Jack left the chamber, humming a bacchanalian song.

Shortly thereafter I heard the street-door cautiously unbolted, and looking from my window I saw Jack — arrayed in his white vest, and a blue coat with gilt buttons, with a shining hat on his head and polished boots on his feet — leaving the house. Just as he turned the corner he glanced up at his chamber-window, and, catching sight of Mrs. P.'s face thereat, blew his nose in a defiant manner, and vanished.

Thereupon Mrs. P. ejaculated, "The brute!" and immediately left the room. Afterward, when I descended the stairs, on my way out to breakfast at "The Beautiful Gates," I overheard her ordering Betty to bring up to the dining-room the cold chicken-pie of yesterday, and a bottle of ale from the cellar.

II.

JACK POTTS AND WIFE NEW YEAR'S NIGHT.

SHORTLY after Jack Potts disappeared around the street-corner, on New-Year morning, I, having finished my toilet, sallied out in the same direction. While discussing my coffee and the morning paper together, at "The Beautiful Gate," Jack, accompanied by half a dozen clever fellows, entered and called for hot whisky punches, which he and his party apparently imbibed with great satisfaction. I came to the conclusion then, that both Jack and his white vest would "be in a pretty state" when night came. I was more fully impressed with the truthfulness of this remark of Mrs. Potts's as the day wore on, and I encountered Jack at several different places where I called. On last meeting him, just at evening, he desired me to give to Mrs. Potts, for him, when I should go home, his hat, (hic,) together with the compliments of the season, (hic,) and to say that he would bring his white (hic) vest along with himself toward morning.

Of course, I had no intention of complying with either of these preposterous requests, although, in a general way, I promised Jack that I would. When, however, I prepared to depart, after Jack had left, I discovered that my hat was missing. Jack, to make certain that I would take his hat home, had worn mine off with him, and left his own in its place. I should not have recognized it as Jack's, were it not that his name was written in its crown. Jack had issued forth in the morning with the glossiest of hats, but, alas! it now looked as if its course was nearly run, and its palmiest days departed. Such a shapeless, napless, battered,

used-up hat — such a bunged-in and bulged-out hat — such a broken brimmed and cracked crowned hat — and, altogether, such an inebriated, dissipated, tight, drunken-looking old hat as it had become, was truly sorrowful for one of my correct habits to behold.

If it could possibly have resulted in any good, I would have stormed and blasted Jack Potts and his hat; but, knowing that such proceeding on my part could be of no benefit, and Jack, with my hat, being irrevocably gone, I was fain to place the unfortunate hat on my own head, and forthwith start for home. It had been my intention to make several more calls on my neighbors round about, but Jack's hat acted like an extinguisher; and, when I came to put it on, it fairly put out all further plans of such a nature. For how, I asked myself, could I appear at the door of any respectable house in Lollipop, and expect to be admitted therein, while wearing such a punched and punchy-looking hat? No, indeed; I must go home.

It is no very pleasant thing, as I discovered, for a sober man to appear in the full-moon lighted streets, wearing a drunken fellow's hat. It renders him liable to be remarked about, in a manner no way flattering to his vanity. It even exposes him to being made a target of for the snow-balls of malicious boys. There is no end, indeed, to the little inconveniences and unpleasantnesses attendant upon wearing this style of hat.

Suppose, after having blocks of ice and balls of snow thrown at you, you take off the hat which is the cause of your trouble, and hide it, as I did, under your great-coat, you think, perhaps, that you have done a wise thing. To be sure, the north wind drives the drifting snow into your eyes, and sifts it through your hair, till your head feels like a frost-bitten pippin; but even this is preferable, you think, to hearing yourself spoken of as being "on a spree," and insolently requested by passers-by to show your paces, as if you were on a race-course. But, by-and-by, a boy meets

you; as you pass, he stops, turns round, looks after you, and then shouts aloud, "Halloo! old fellow, I say, what asylum did you get out of? was the weather pretty warm there when you left?" and then the rascal deliberately shies a snow-ball at you, which makes its mark, as one did on me, on your defenceless head. So you put on your hat again, as I did, thinking it quite as well to be taken for a tipsy chap, who knew enough to keep his head covered, as for a crazy man who did not. Rendered, at last, quite desperate, you even essay to imitate, in the darkish portions of the street, the gait of the toper whose hat you have on, and try to imagine — vainly, of course — the feelings which such a one must have, so situated. If you are a long distance from home, as I was, you run a great many terrible risks — escaping some, and encountering others — before you finally reach your own domicil.

When, however, I gained the door of Jack's house, not wishing to disturb Mrs. Potts, I proceeded very carefully to open it with my latch-key, and then, with the least possible noise, I entered the hall. I even took off my boots, so as to render my footsteps inaudible; but no sooner did I begin to ascend the stairs, than the parlor-door was thrown open by Mrs. Potts herself, who, in a very bland tone, said that she hoped I was not intending to go to my own room without making her a New-Year call. Mine would be another name, she said, added to her list of callers, which she was keeping to show to Mr. Potts, on his return home; and, by the by, had I, she asked, met the gentleman in my wanderings through the town?

"Oh, yes," I replied; "and he evidently was enjoying himself in his own peculiar manner."

"As how?" she inquired.

"Why," I answered, trying to look sober, "in a spirited manner."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. P., evidently understanding me, for her eyes sparkled, and her lips shot forth the word spitefully from between them.

"A happy man is that Potts," I said, half to Mrs. P. and half to the stair-railing over which I was leaning, "and a fortunate dog in having so excellent a helpmeet."

"You certainly are very kind, sir," said Mrs. Potts, "to say so; but he don't deserve me. I am too good for him, sir."

"Doubtless, Mrs. Potts," I replied; "but we men are apt to be undeserving of all good gifts, and I dare say Jack is no better than others of his sex; and that is why I call him a lucky dog. Good night, Mrs. Potts. Present my respects to John when he comes home." And, with the assistance of the banisters, I ascended to my room.

"Good night, sir," said Mrs. P., and immediately retreated into her apartment.

It may have been an hour thereafter, it may have been two, or, indeed, close upon the morning watch, — for I had been asleep, so I could not with any certainty name the exact time; besides, my watch was run down, — when I was aroused by a thumping sound, as of some one with a wooden leg, coming up the stairs. On lighting my candle, and looking forth, I beheld Jack making the ascent, and dragging after him a barber's pole. Mrs. Potts, in a white wrapper, and with her hair in curl-papers, that formed, as it were, a second border to her night-cap, stood at the top of the stairs, watching, with forced calmness, Jack's futile efforts. At last, as the reckless fellow plunged the large end of the pole into the hard-finished wall, Mrs. P. could restrain herself no longer. "Now, then, you miserable Potts," she exclaimed, "see what you are doing. If ever a woman has seen trouble, and borne with a man till longer bearing would be a crime, I 'm sure that I am that woman. For twelve years, Potts, on each New-Year day, you have engaged in just such another ridiculous affair as this. I knew how it would be this morning, before you ever started to go out. I could see this end, and the plight you 're in now, just as plain as if it had been shown me by the spirits.

And a pretty state, I dare say, your white vest is in by this time. Oh, you mean, good-for-nothing Potts, you!" she added, as Jack, with the end of the pole, knocked to pieces the hall-lamp. "Now, I guess, you are satisfied. I wish it had been your head, though;" and the exasperated woman shook the row of curl-papers at him.

Potts all the while said not a word, but steadily gave his whole mind and strength to the getting up-stairs of the barber's pole. Discouraged at last, however, but still keeping silent, he relinquished his efforts, and turning on me a look of indescribable anguish, he allowed himself to be led away by Mrs. P., and so disappeared from my sight within his own room.

"Now, then, Mr. John Potts," I heard his wife say, "I want you to give me an account of yourself."

"I did n't keep any, my dear," he replied.

"Don't say 'my dear' to me, sir, if you please," she continued. "I am not your dear. If I were, you would not have spent New-Year day in the way you have. You 're a shame and a sorrow to me, Potts, and a living disgrace to your children. What an example to set them, Potts! Just think of it. There 's Tom, only ten years old, and yet he is already following in your footsteps. Remember what he did Christmas. You can't? Of course you cannot; but I can. He got into the store-room, and helped himself to rum-cherries till he was tipsy. Oh, you need n't laugh, you miserable Potts, you, for you 'll find it, one of these days, no laughing matter. And me — look at me, sir, if you dare, and think how lonely I must have been, here in this great house, with not a soul to speak a comforting word to me, and you gone, no one knows where."

"Did n't he" — and here Jack, I suppose, pointed towards my apartment — "call on you?"

"No, he just did n't," replied Mrs. P.; "and I 'm thankful for that. Oh, he 's another pretty man — so soft-spoken and amiable before one, but so mean behind one's back.

Such a time as he has had to-day, too. He thought I would n't know it. Dunce! did n't I see his hat, which he tried to hide from my sight, under his coat, as he went up-stairs, and did n't it tell the story? I 've seen crushed hats before, as you very well know, Potts, but I never saw such a crushed hat as is his in the next room."

"Was it crushed badly?" asked Jack.

"I never," answered Mrs. P., "have seen its equal. What an awful row he must have been engaged in, — and to think, Mr. Potts, that he is under the same roof with us."

"It 's horrible to contemplate," Jack replied; "but the hat itself, my dear, belongs to me. I sent it home to you by our neighbor, and borrowed his in its place."

"Mr. John Potts," exclaimed Mrs. P., solemnly, "you 'll be the death of me, one of these days. You 're a mean, mean man."

And Mrs. Potts closed her eyes, I suppose, and immediately went to sleep, for not a single word more did she utter.

III.

HANKY AND KATRINA VANDER HEYDEN AT HOME.

MY neighbors who live over the way are very different sort of people from Mr. and Mrs. John Potts. They lead, I am certain, much happier lives. They also are married, and though no better matched in point of size, — for the husband is tall and thin, while the wife is short and plump, — yet in disposition they are as like as the right and left sides of a ripe orange. A very cheerful couple are they, and the husband whistles, and the wife sings like a music-box, all the day long, — only, unlike the music-box, she does not require winding up. Fond, too, are they of children. Their house swarms with them, as if it were a great beehive. There are children clustering on the roof and in the garret, children looking out of every window, children sitting on the stairs and in the cellar, children playing in the back yard and in the front, children going out and coming in all day and evening. Sometimes, from my window, I have counted thirty and forty boys and girls at my neighbor's over the way; not all of them their own, however; oh, no; for most of them belong to *their* neighbors. All the neighbors round about — except the two maiden ladies on the corner and myself, who neither of us have children — allow their little ones to visit my neighbor's children over the way. And fine times they have there, and much gingerbread, and crullers, and doughnuts, and molasses candy, do they consume under the hospitable roof of

HANKY AND KATRINA VANDER HEYDEN.

Hanky Vander Heyden is a Dutchman. His father and mother before him were Dutchmen. He has brothers and sisters who are Dutchmen, and, for aught I know, scores of uncles, aunts, and cousins, who all are likewise Dutchmen. The first of the race — at least, the first in this country of whom the Vander Heydens themselves possess any knowledge — was himself a Dutchman, and came from Leyden in Holland to New Amsterdam in America during the latter part of the reign of William the Testy. He was a mere baby in arms when this doughty governor died, and, in reality, only made his first appearance on the stage of life as an actor in the days of Peter the Headstrong.

Although not set forth in the veritable "History of New-York," written by the learned and beloved Diedrich Knickerbocker, — for I, as a veracious narrator should, have made diligent search therein without success, — still it is a well-authenticated fact, that Cornelius Vander Heyden, the earliest known progenitor of the family, was a drummer-boy in the redoubtable army of the sturdy Peter, and was celebrated through the length and breadth of Manhattan for being able to beat many warlike airs on his drum, and also for his skill in whistling at the same moment very fife-sounding accompaniments. He was, too, an exceedingly terrible fighter, and it is recorded in the legends of the house, that he was knocked over five times during the dreadful attack of the army of Peter the Headstrong on the redoubtable Fort Christina, by the recoil of a gun in the hands of a brother soldier.

Hanky is the sixth in descent from this valiant character, and, though not so warlike a personage as his ancestor, is quite as celebrated for his musical talent. He can beat a drum, play a fiddle, and whistle as piercingly as ever could his great progenitor. In fact, whistling seems hereditary in the family of the Vander Heydens; and each generation,

since the days of Cornelius, have been more or less celebrated for the same. I said Hanky is not a warlike person, and yet I am prepared to assert that he himself has shed more blood than his worthy ancestor ever saw. For Hanky's business is that of drawing teeth, and his customers are so numerous, that they keep him busily employed each day, in his particular vocation, from dawn till dark.

Hanky's good *frau* has blessed him with no less than ten white-headed urchins, who each is the very image of his excellent father. At least this is what the old women in the village say; and, as they all, in turn, assisted at their coming into the world, they of course ought to know. His wife Katrina, however, — a square-shaped little body, who eschews hoops and crinoline, but wears half a dozen thickly quilted silk petticoats, — declares that her boys never did look like the "old man," but just favored her own family like pictures. Katrina was born a Higginbotham — a family much older and solider than the Vander Heydens. Between Katrina and Hanky this brood of ten are so many bones of cheerful contention, each standing up for a family likeness. Indeed this is the only subject on which they are not cordially united in the same mind. On all other topics they agree with the exactness of a hair.

Hanky, who is about fifty years of age, has amassed quite a little property, which is snugly invested in bonds and mortgages; and he is daily adding to his wealth, notwithstanding the great drain made on his pocket-book by his mischievous boys, in the separate items of jackets, trousers, and other articles of a boy's wardrobe. But Hanky is a careful man, counting his pennies and laying them up securely where neither moth nor rust corrupts them, and where thieves cannot very easily get at them to steal.

Occasionally of an evening, after I have made certain, by reconnoitring, from my apartment, the various windows of Hanky's house, that his olive-plants are all deposited in hot-beds, I take my pipe and go over to have a smoke and

a talk with him, and to taste his good dame's pies and cookies. Katrina and I have been friends for a great number of years; how many, I am unable to state exactly. To be candid, however, I am willing to confess that she was an old flame of mine twenty years ago, when, a blooming Dutch belle, she laughed at Hanky and his attentions. I will not say, when I offered her my hand and heart, — all, in truth, that I had to offer, — that she refused both them and me; for such a confession would be foolish in a man of my years to make; but I will say that I never desired to marry a woman more than I did her. That, remember, was in years gone by. If she should, some day — which Heaven forbid! — be left a widow, I do not think that, under existing circumstances, I would be likely to renew my suit in that quarter. Between a girl of eighteen or twenty, ballasted with a half score of canvas bags filled with dollars, and a woman of forty, freighted with the same number of children, there is, in my mind, a vast and striking difference.

When, of bright Sunday mornings, I see Hanky and Katrina wending their way to the Lutheran chapel, followed by ten jackets and trousers, stuffed with as many fat boys of different periods of childhood and adolescence, I feel very thankful that I do not occupy the position towards them which Hanky does. I cannot avoid wondering, however, whether, if I had married Katrina, the ten white-headed boys, ranging from burly eighteen to toddling four years, would have been my children. I am very confident — remembering my Bohemian habits — that I never should have been able to support them, if such had been the case. I see very plainly the hand of Providence in all these things, and am extremely thankful that Hanky, and not I, is their father.

When, some twenty years since, I learnt that Hanky was about to marry Katrina, — she whose smiles and frowns had been to me, for years, as sun and shadow in my life, — I

incontinently left Lollipop, shaking its dust off my feet and her memory from my heart, as I departed, and became a waif, drifting here and there over the world, the companion of good-for-nothing poets, unknown authors, and unappreciated painters. At the end of ten years I returned, but little better off, in a moneyed point of view, than when I commenced my wanderings, and somewhat afraid, too, lest in meeting Katrina I should lose my peace of mind.

One morning, shortly after my arrival, while wandering around the market-place, I accidentally encountered a portly dame with a basket on her arm, and five dirty-faced urchins hanging to her apron-string; but for her genial, unaltered smile, and the merry voice with which she greeted me, I should have failed to recognize in her the ideal of my youth. Even to a superficial observer there would have appeared, in her personal attractions, sundry wonderful developments which time had generously bestowed on her, but which I did not consider in the light of improvements. She was a plump girl when I had parted from her; but her waist had considerably amplified since then, and she was a good deal squarer shaped every way.

She said, however, that she was glad to see me, and then immediately proceeded to call my attention to her five boys, introducing each of them to me by name. When she had finished the presentation of these, she added that there was another one at home in his cradle which I must go to see. I said I would, and then perceiving that her basket was heavily laden, I offered to carry it for her: she kindly permitted me to take it, and so, side by side, followed by the five dirty-faced lads, I walked once again down the familiar street, with my old, old love.

People that knew us laughed as we passed them; but for my part I don't think I felt at all like laughing, though Katrina rattled on in her old way, and talked of the days gone by as if they were but yesterday, — breaking off occasionally to scold one of the boys for imitating a drunken

man, chasing a pig, or casting a stone at a yellow dog. One of the five — the brightest of the lot, I thought — was named after me. And when she uttered his name, in the same tone and with the exact words in which I had countless times heard her speak to me, saying, "Stop acting so, can't you?" I, somehow, became confused, and more than half believed — though, after all, it appeared like a hideous nightmare — that I never had been away, but was myself married to Katrina, and consequently father to the lads following behind us.

When, however, Hanky himself opened the door for us, and shook his head merrily at me, and proceeded to address Katrina as "ducky," and "my little woman," I managed to shake off the nightmare, and to bid them "good morning." Then, retreating to the hotel where I was stopping, I shut myself within my room, and, fortified with sundry comfortable things, I gravely considered the case in all its different ramifications; and when, at evening, I walked forth in the summer twilight, the enchantment, which for years had bound me, was broken, and I breathed freely, and without the weight on my heart which for more than ten years had been there.

As I walked along under the starlight, through well-known ways, I could not avoid saying to myself, that a fat woman bearing a market-basket, and followed by five tow-headed boys, is not calculated to keep alive in one's breast the love which, in other years, was given to a merry maid, now, alas! a wife and mother, fat and forty at that.

So, occasionally of an evening, I go over to see Katrina and Hanky, nor fear that my visits may occasion either them or me loss of sleep or peace of mind.

IV.

HANKY AND THE WIDOW'S SLEIGH-RIDE.

OCCASIONALLY, of an evening, I visit my neighbors over the way. I passed last evening with them. Hanky and I smoked our pipes and told stories, while Katrina — busy little woman that she is — occupied herself in new-seating several pair of juvenile trousers. I listened to Hanky, but I looked on Katrina. It was pleasant to mark how quickly her needle flew; to see how scientifically she cut, and shaped, and fitted, and matched her patches. And then when she held up the dilapidated trousers before the light, looking for their thin and weak spots, it was, to me, a very comical sight, and caused me to laugh aloud.

"Ah! you laugh now," said Katrina, merrily; "but by-and-by, perhaps, you 'll look grave. Your time will come, Master Bachelor, one of these days. You can't go through life the free and easy individual you now are. A net is weaving around you, and every year its meshes are drawing closer together."

"Alas!" I replied, "I shall never marry until I am wedded to my coffin."

This time Katrina laughed. She knew that this reply was a standing joke of mine, as once upon a time there had been a little, hoaxing, coaxing, good-for-nothing, blue-eyed hussy, living on the island of Nantucket, — a relative of the worthy admiral, Sir Isaac Coffin, — named Miriam Coffin, to whom, when quite a boy, I had made any quantity of love, and with whom I had exchanged a lock of hair; but, bless me! nothing ever came of it — 't was a

childish affair; and so one day she married the mate — a second mate, I guess he was — of a whaler, and became a Hussey for life. I understand that in the matter of juvenile hussies she has done very well for the "second mate," and, for my part, I trust that his "lay" is large enough to enable him to support the "young fry" comfortably.

"How 's dat?" said Hanky; "tell him about it."

And so, though I had more than fifty times related the circumstance to "him," I once more repeated it, as above narrated.

"And are you," asked Hanky, as I finished, "lying off and on in the offing still for dat little craft?"

I nodded my head.

"And you 're waiting for her skipper to kick the bucket?" he inquired.

I nodded again.

"Well, now den, Billy-boy," — my name (I do not think that I have mentioned it before) is William Finch, Esq., — "you just tell him what you think about Katrina here."

"I think of her," I replied, "as a very kind wife — too kind, indeed, for you — and as a most excellent mother."

"Is dat all?" asked Hanky.

"Yes," I answered.

"Why, I thought," said Hanky, dat you loved her yourself a leetle."

"Only Platonically, Hanky, "that is all," I replied.

"Is dat all?" asked Hanky. "My little woman now is disappointed; are n't you, Katrina?"

"No!" answered Katrina; "and I am certain that Mr. Finch knows you too well to care for aught you say."

"Indeed I do, Mrs. Vander Heyden. I 've known him a long time, — ever since he and the Widow Ravenplume took a sleigh-ride together."

"Oh, donder!" exclaimed Hanky.

"Do tell me about it," said Katrina.

"Oh, blitzen!" shouted Hanky.

And so, without heeding Hanky or his outcries, I proceeded to narrate the story of

HANKY AND THE WIDOW'S SLEIGH-RIDE.

"When Hanky Vander Heyden first came to this part of the country, — nearly twenty-five years ago, — the Widow Ravenplume was considered rather a fast woman. She bought lottery-tickets, played a winning hand of whist, and patronized cock-fights, or, as she modestly termed them, chanticleer battles. She was a masculine-appearing woman, — tall, gaunt, and grenadier-like. She had large hands and feet, and threw her head back when she walked, for all the world like the man who carries the bass-drum in our German band. She was somewhat gay in her dress, and delighted in feathers, flowers, and bright-colored ribbons. Of course she had money out at interest, safely invested in bonds and mortgages, and was called rich and parsimonious. The number of the years of her life was, as an unsolved problem, unknown; even her intimate friend, Miss Prudence Jones, did not know it; and when *she* failed to know a thing, no one else could be expected to. The widow wore false hair, — a front-piece, with puffs, which was very becoming. She had false teeth made of white wax, which she shaped anew every day; and false ramparts, formed of the same material as that behind which lay the defenders of New Orleans on the 8th January, 1815. The widow's Christian name was Betsy, but when she went into half-mourning — a few months after Mr. Ravenplume's death — she wrote 'Elizabeth' on her cards, and gravely informed her friends that henceforth Elizabeth was her name; though she had about as much right to it as Hanky would have to call himself Henry.

"It happened that the first evening on which Hanky made his appearance in public — which was at a 'quilting bee,' at Mrs. Squire Bunker's — that the widow was present, and proceeded immediately to set her foot on his corns,

and lay her hand on his shoulder, and so led him away a captive. That night Hanky danced forty times with the widow. He escorted her to the supper-table, where he loaded her plate with sour-krout and doughnuts. He waited upon her home, and kissed her behind the hall-door, as he bade her good-night!"

"Oh, donder!" Hanky shouted.

"He called on the widow the next day; he took tea — cheap black tea — with her the afternoon following, and the ensuing evening he invited her to a sleigh-ride;" — "oh, blitzen!" interrupted Hanky; — "and away they went.

"It was a clear, cold, starlight night in January that the Widow Ravenplume and Hanky rode out of Lollipop, well protected from the cold by buffalo-robes, hot bricks, and hot drinks, and glided swiftly along over the smooth, snow-covered track, towards the 'Red Stores,' — some eight or nine miles distant. Upon what subjects Hanky and the widow conversed, while on their way thither, I do not know; but this much, however, I do know, that on their way back — whether it were the hot toddies, of which he had freely partaken, or the flattering words of the widow, or his remembrance of her bonds and mortgages, or her gentle pressure of his hand, or what it were I cannot positively say, but, at all events, whatever it were that influenced him — he, Hanky Vander Heyden, dentist, somewhere on the line of those eight or nine miles, did then and there offer himself to the said widow, and was immediately accepted."

"Saint Nicholas!" ejaculated Hanky.

Katrina looked sober.

"Before twenty-four hours had elapsed, everybody in Lollipop knew that Hanky and the widow were engaged to be married. How any one had learned it, was to the parties themselves a mystery. Hanky vowed to the widow, in very good Low Dutch, that he had never whispered a word of it to a living soul; and the widow declared, in

straightforward Yankee, — she came from 'Down East,' — that she had not lisped a breath of it to any one, except to her dearest friend, Miss Prudence Jones, and that she, Miss Jones, was just the pink of discretion and the seal of secrecy.

"Well, the affair, as such affairs usually do, ran along smoothly for a while — Hanky all the time living in clover, partaking of the widow's cheap black teas, and her still cheaper baker's cakes, which she bought at the rate of thirteen for sixpence, — passing his evenings with her, and occupying his nights in dreaming of her bonds and mortgages. But Hanky's love verified at last the words of the poet concerning the course of true love; and one day, shortly after Hanky had presented the widow with an upper and lower set of enamelled teeth, warranted better than originals, — and when she had faithfully tried them and found them equal to her expectations, — she declared openly and boldly, in the midst of the sewing society, that, though Hanky Vander Heyden made very good teeth, she did not think that he would make as good and perfect a husband; and so the engagement was broken off, and Hanky jilted."

"Donder and blitzen take the widow!" shouted Hanky; "and Katrina, little woman, mix him something hot."

"A large proportion of the population of Lollipop," I continued, after Hanky had obtained from his little woman that for which he asked, "said that the only reason the widow became engaged to Hanky was, that so she might obtain a set of teeth free of expense. Even Hanky himself believes this saying."

"Ya," cried Hanky, "dat is so."

"And now, Hanky," I said, "if you will play a march for me on your fife, I'll bid you and Katrina good-night, and go home."

"What for?" he asked; "because you told Katrina dat dondering story about him and the widow?"

"Ya," I cried, mockingly.

"Well, den," he replied, "give de old man de fife, Katrina."

Katrina did so.

"Now, den," said Hanky, "when him begins to play, you go."

I promised "him" I would.

Then, much to my amazement and merriment, Hanky struck up the "Rogue's March"; and with that complimentary air in my ears I departed.

After I had reached my own apartments, I heard my neighbor, Mrs. Potts, in the adjoining room, say to her husband, "John, John Potts, wake up; I've got something to tell you."

"Well," replied John.

"Our lodger, Billy Finch, has just come in," whispered Mrs. P.

"Well," said Jack.

"Do you know," she asked, "where he has been this evening?"

"No!" groaned Jack.

"Then I'll tell you," said Mrs. Potts; "he's been courting Katrina Vander Heyden again."

"Well," answered Jack.

"Well, indeed!" reiterated Deborah; "but it is n't well; it's a sin and a shame; and if I were her husband, I'd turn him out of doors."

"Well," moaned Jack, despairingly.

"Oh, you're an unfeeling, miserable wretch!" exclaimed Mrs. Potts, "to lie by my side, and cry, 'Well, well,' when it is n't well, but ill!"

And the disconsolate Mrs. P. covered her head with the bedclothes, and, sobbing, refused to be comforted. Pretty soon I heard Jack snore, and then Mrs. Potts called him a brute, and fell asleep herself.

V.

O. PHILANDER COE, THE POET.

ANOTHER neighbor of mine, who lives just around the corner, and inhabits an attic room in the principal boarding-house in the village, is a poet. He is young, not over twenty years of age, perhaps; has a silky moustache, and wears Byron collars. In summer time, on moonlight nights, he takes his guitar and goes about the village serenading young ladies. On these occasions he sings his own songs; and very pretty songs, too, they are. Love is generally the subject of them. The words are adapted to some popular melody; and as he has a very musical voice, his entertainments are highly esteemed. Of late, however, since the cold weather set in, and after a certain proud young lady discarded him, he has refrained from engaging in these exhibitions. Indeed he has become quite a recluse, and seldom ventures abroad in the light of day. He entirely avoids large assemblages, but drops in occasionally, of an evening, to see me and talk about books and poets. He delights in books; and when the remembrance of his unfortunate attachment does not intrude on his thoughts, he finds much comfort in composing poems, chiefly of an amatory character. Give him, he says, pen, ink, and paper, and he cares not for the frivolities of life. He prefers strawberries and cream to mush and milk, but is contented with either. His idea of the value of money is very imperfect; and it is all the same to him whether he has five dollars or five dimes in his purse, so long as his immediate wants are supplied. He would be more likely to pay out his last dollar to-day for a new book, than to

keep it to buy with it his to-morrow's dinner, though he knew not how else that meal could be obtained. As Jack Potts says, he has every kind of sense except common sense.

The poet's name, as it appears on his visiting-card, is O. PHILANDER COE, which, as he facetiously remarks, is in itself a sort of poem. The initial O is for Obed, — his maternal grandfather's baptismal appellation, — but which, for the sake of brevity and euphony, he suppresses on his card.

The well-known firm of Ticknot and Meadows, some little while since, issued, in their famed azure and gilt binding, an edition of his poems, which, however, were published under a *nom de plume*. The volume, I understand, has not met with a ready sale; and, therefore, I propose, as its readers are limited, to give, from time to time, certain poems contained therein. The poem, however, which I give below, is not as yet included in the printed volume, though, doubtless, it will appear in a second edition, if one should ever chance to be called for by the public. I do not think that it will be indelicate for me to mention that the second edition will contain an engraved portrait of the poet, after a photograph by Brady.

THE POET'S LOVE.

How much I love her none can tell:
  Alas! she spurned me from her side;
  She said she 'd never be my bride,
And on me all her anger fell.

For she had wealth, and I had none;
  And she was proud of her descent,
  And scornful looks on me she bent,
And asked me where my race begun.

Calmly I answered — proud as she —
  That little cared I for my name;
  That mine was but a poet's fame,
And that I came of low degree.

Then mockingly she laughed, and cried
  That I might claim from her a kiss
  When I had learned to write like *this*,
And then, too, would she be my bride.

She touched a volume as she spoke;
  I took it up and looked within, —
  I had not thought my suit to win,
But as I read my hope awoke.

My cheeks grew red as reddest wine;
  And then my bounding heart stood still;
  I knew that I could have my will,
For all the poems there were mine.

And yet I failed to claim my bride;
  All sorrowing I turned away,
  Saying I 'd come some other day,
And thus I left her with her pride.

And now I walk the world alone;
  I live a life of great unrest,
  I keep my sorrows in my breast,
Nor care to hear her lightest tone.

No one, after reading the above verses, will deny that my neighbor the poet is intellectual, and that poetic sense in him is strongly developed. Indeed he gives his entire mind to poetry, and seldom ventures into the walks of prose. As his volume of poems was published anonymously, it is not strange that the lady of his love was unaware that he was the poet whose verse she so greatly admired. She has since learned the truth, but I have not heard that she grieves in the least over her treatment of O. Philander Coe.

I have refrained from mentioning, as long as possible, that, though my neighbor the poet has now "walked the world alone" for the space of eight or nine weeks, it does not necessarily follow that he will "walk alone" for as long a period of time to come. Indeed, I will state that he has

already attained the maximum number of the weeks of his loneliness; and that on any day, henceforth, I may expect to hear of his being infatuated with some other angelic being than the one over whom he now grieves. Love and poetry are as drink and meat to him. Deprive him of these and you take away the food wherewith he lives. It is not for me, however, who was engaged in numberless love-affairs in the days of my own incipient manhood, to revile my neighbor the poet. Too many dead and buried loves, now forgotten, would doubtless rise up rebukingly before me, should I so do. Too many tresses of glossy hair, once dearly prized, but now scattered to the winds, would come floating down before my eyes, and shame me into silence Too many old letters, crowded with tender words and precious vows, long since burnt and turned to ashes, and their promises broken and disregarded, would be remembered once more, and I should read, amidst the burning words and sweet expressions, in blood-red letters, "Treason to the god of love."

For these reasons, therefore, if for no others, am I tender of the foibles of my neighbor the poet. Time, and some further experience in these matters of the heart, will show him the sands upon which his love-freighted vessel drives, and the rocks upon which it splits. Then he will have learned to steer clear of them, and perhaps at last will some day be able to guide his shattered bark into a quiet haven, where he will find rest and happiness for all his life to come. I say perhaps, since years must elapse before my neighbor the poet can expect to gain such a harbor; for I — even I, with over forty years' experience — find myself still tacking to and fro, searching for a pleasant anchorage ground.

Life, however, is not altogether dark to my neighbor the poet. He finds a good many bright spots in it. The sunshine falls on him as he travels up and down the stairs of his boarding-house. Dwelling on the third floor — di-

rectly under his apartment — is a flaxen-haired little girl, named Edith, of some ten or twelve summers, who wakes him each morning by singing her childlike melodies; who opens the door and smiles on him whenever she hears his footsteps ascending or descending on the stairs, and who each night, when she utters her simple prayers, asks her Heavenly Father to bless and keep her friend, the poet who lives in the attic room above.

Not many of the inhabitants of Lollipop care to call upon my neighbor the poet. He lives so high up in the world — and then, too, he has neither gold nor the influence gold can give — that it seems to most of the inhabitants, that attentions shown to him would never result in any gain to them; for these reasons they seldom molest or disturb the poet in his sanctum, though his attic room is by no means the cheerless place attic rooms are apt to be. After the dark and narrow and winding garret-stairs, which lead to his apartment, are passed, it is an agreeable surprise to enter the poet's cosy and comfortable room. It is adorned with paintings and pictures, and lined with books. But the miserable sinners of Lollipop don't know this, and if they did, it would make no difference, for such things are not in their line. Besides, poor fellow! he is always borrowing money, and seldom has it in his power to return it again; and who, of the wealthy, would desire to lend money to a wretched poet, who never would repay them? So it is that only moneyless individuals like myself, who possess nothing that can be borrowed, frequent the attic room of my neighbor the poet. There is one exception, however, to this. Jack Potts, the warm-hearted fellow! always goes to see the poet when he has a pocket well lined with gold; and he always comes away minus some of his riches.

Of course our poet is an extravagant dog, especially in the matter of books; he never meets with a fresh one without purchasing it. The more costly it be gotten up,

the better pleased is he with it. He is partial, too, to fine engravings; and his assortment of cap, letter, and note paper is unequalled by any in the village. He is fond of light wines and late suppers, and will walk a mile or more to obtain an improved view of a summer sunset. He believes in giants, dwarfs, and fairies; and regularly on Christmas eve he hangs his stocking up for Santa Claus to fill; and though he never obtains anything in it, he trusts that on the succeeding Christmas he will; and so he lives on hope while the year runs round. From his dormer-windows in the attic he beholds castles in the air, and sees ships coming home from sea. Many of these castles and ships belong to him, though some he thinks are owned by rich men in the village. He himself builds castles and sends ships abroad, and at times believes himself to be wealthy; but this, of course, is an idle fancy. Nor do I imagine that he will ever possess any real estate or much personal property; and as for such things as stocks and bonds and mortgages, I don't think that he will ever clearly comprehend what they are. Of gold and silver, and precious stones, I suppose he has a slight knowledge; and with bank-notes he possesses a feeble acquaintance.

Sometimes my neighbor the poet lacks buttons on his shirt, and is neglectful of his hair; but these things occur, however, only when "he lives a life of great unrest," for at other times he is careful of his adornings, and is slightly given to enamelled studs and sleeve-buttons. But my friend possesses a gentle and a loving heart, and attaches to himself, in a wonderful degree, the little children of the village, who all love and confide in my neighbor the poet.

VI.

THE POET'S NEW AND OLD LOVE.

AS I predicted in the preceding paper that he soon would, my neighbor the poet has ceased to lead a life of great unrest, — figuratively and poetically speaking, — and turned his eyes on, and given his attentions to, a young maiden, more fair and beautiful, as he confidentially informed me, than any of his former loves. He has addressed to her, through the columns of the "Midnight Sun," several sonnets, — in fact, a series of sonnets, — treating of her personal attractions, commencing with her hair, which he extols for its fineness, its "marigold shade," and its great length; for when loosened and permitted to fall down, it hides from his enamored sight unknown and countless beauties of which he may only dream. From her hair he proceeds to her eyes, which

> "From New England's bluebells caught their shade;"

then he touches her lips, and about them he lovingly sings, terming them

> "Rose-buds round which the honey-bee lingers;"

and so, on he goes, sonnet after sonnet, till at last he reaches her dainty feet, which he compares to the

> "White caps that dance on the wind-beaten billows,"

probably from having first encountered them at a ball, where they were encased in white satin slippers, and doing good service for their proprietor.

Miss Mary Golde — the name of the young lady — is a stranger in Lollipop; nor has our poet with her any per-

sonal acquaintance. As yet he stands afar off and views her, as it were, through an Indian-summer sort of an atmosphere — one particularly appreciated by poets and lovers. Seen through my eyes, however, and by the aid of my forty-years'-experience spectacles, the young lady is not at all extraordinary. I think that Katrina Higginbotham, in her palmy days, before she knew or even dreamed of Hanky Vander Heyden, when I was paying to her my court, was a much more splendid appearing woman than the blue-eyed subject of my neighbor the poet's sonnets. Yet I never wrote any verses in her praise, nor thought, forsooth! that she stood in need of them. I would as soon have dreamed of giving her what Biddy calls a "recommend of character" as have offered to her laudatory verse, even if it could have appeared in the columns of the "Midnight Sun," and been puffed into notoriety by the editor himself, through a notice like the following: —

"Our young and talented fellow-citizen, O. Philander Coe, Esq., the poet, as will be seen by glancing at our poetical department, addresses another sonnet — making the sixth which he has written this week — to the beautiful and accomplished stranger who is sojourning with us during the present winter. Such zeal and attention as he displays should not, we think, be unrewarded by the fair one so happily sonnetized."

Of course my neighbor the poet does not perceive how ridiculous the above remarks cause him to appear. Why? Because, as Jack Potts very truly says, he lacks common sense. I have no doubt but that the poet blushed when he read it, for he is not vain, and vanity has no place in his breast. Were he vain, the azure and gilt edition of his poems had never appeared under a *nom de plume*. He might very often, if he so chose, be lionized in a small and genteel way, by those in the village who give dinner-parties to friends from the city who visit them during the summer months; but, to his credit be it said, my young friend in-

variably refuses all invitations to these parties, preferring to abide within his attic room, where, as if to console himself for the grand dinner he has lost, he indulges in a bottle of Sauterne and some sponge-cake, and employs his moments either in reading Tennyson or composing a love-song. Of course, as Jack Potts would say, my poetical friend displays his lack of common sense in thus acting, for no one with the least particle of that blessed commodity would so do. I am very certain that I would go to the dinner in preference to staying in my attic, even with Bordeaux, cake, and Tennyson surrounding me.

Notwithstanding my neighbor's love of retirement, and his aversion to being "shown up," he is, for all this, susceptible to flattery. He is very much gratified at having me call upon him, and regards my visit, I think, somewhat in the light of a pilgrimage to a poet's shrine. He feels himself to be, I imagine, for the time at least, another Burns or a Halleck. When I address him, which I sometimes do, as the last and least of poets, I believe that he feels very proud of the distinction. And it is something of which to be proud, this title of poet, even though one be last and least among them. It is something to hold fellowship with Bryant and Longfellow, even though it be afar off. It is something to be handed down to posterity, embalmed in Ticknot and Meadows's azure and gilt publications. It is something to reflect on, of a pleasant nature, that one is among such a goodly company. If I were a poet, — which, however, I am not, — I would desire to have my melodies of spring, my songs of summer, my autumn wailings, and my winter blasts, published by the aforesaid Athenian publishers.

I do not claim for my young friend the title of poet simply from my own conviction of his merit as such, but I base my assertion on firmer grounds, to wit, the judgment of the worthy editors of the "Ocean Monthly," who substantiate the same by purchasing, with sundry gold eagles, the product of my neighbor the poet's brain, and publishing the

same as an original poem in the columns of the said monthly. Lest any of my readers should think that my neighbor the poet writes the transcendental poems that from time to time adorn the pages of the "Ocean," I would respectfully, and at the same time decidedly, declare, that he does not. His poems are, as I have before remarked, mostly of an amatory character, and perhaps slightly inclining to the pastoral. His last poem, — which he read aloud to me an evening or two since, — which concerns, I imagine, the young lady to whom his sonnets were addressed, is entitled —

MARY.

Like melodies unnumbered, breathed by nature, wrought by art,
Falls thy name upon my spirit, bringing sunshine to my heart;
And I deem that name a blessing, yea, an almost holy thing,
For its utterance gives a gladness which no other word can bring;
To my heart it is as music, to my soul it is as prayer,
And like Sabbath-bell its breathing trembles on the quiet air.

Though I've dared not to love thee — save as I would love a saint,
Or a pictured head of beauty, such as Raphael might paint, —
Yet I would that I might woo thee with my songs and with my rhymes,
As fond lovers, robed as minstrels, wooed their loves in ancient times:
Then within my heart a measure, and within my mind a rhyme,
Ever mingling with each other, would like bells make pleasant chime.

'T is a closèd poem to me; 't is as something never known,
The great glory of possessing loving heart to read my own;
Then to list its quiet beatings in the watches of the night,
And to know a face of beauty cometh ever with the light; —
This to me would be a glory, this to me would be a charm,
Little less than Heaven gives me to insure my soul from harm.

Oh, should hope but be exceeded, and I win thy gentle hand,
Through the world together would we journey to the better land;
Moving onward as our shadows, would we wander side by side,
Listening to the changing murmurs wrought by Time's oblivious tide;

Till our youth had faded from us, and become a memory old,
Would our hearts yet beat together till life's verses all were told.

Not always has my neighbor the poet been a resident of Lollipop. When he first came to our village, some five years ago, he was a homespun-jacketed youth, from the country lying some twenty miles back amid the mountains. He had been intimate with Nature since his birth. He knew her in all her variety of moods. He was poetically posted in the characteristics of her changing seasons. He had noted her sunrises and sunsets; had studied the clouds and counted the stars; had listened to the singing of birds, the hum of bees, the trill of locusts, the whir of grasshoppers, and the sound of the bursting of buds and unfolding of leaves on the forest-trees. He knew by the noise of the wind, as it passed through the woods, whether it bent the pines, or the cedars, or the elms, or the oaks, or the maples, in its course. He passed a good many hours dreaming by the side of the brawling brooks, or sunning himself on the hill-side, when all the other members of his father's house thought that he might be better employed if he were planting corn or weeding carrots. He evinced an aversion, however, to rakes, hoes, spades, and useful articles of a like nature, and gave his whole mind apparently to bird's-nests, water-lilies, and berries. He had a predilection for the shadows that chased each other across the mountain-sides, and was favorably inclined to the moonlight flickering on the water. He had the reputation generally, among the neighbors, of being an idle, good-for-nothing boy, who would come, some one day, to a bad end.

My neighbor the poet, at this primeval period of his life, was excessively bashful. He blushed if a girl but looked at him, and if she spoke he ran like an antelope; yet he was ever in love. He adored ladies who oftentimes were old enough to be his grandmother. If they married he grieved over it as if it were their funeral, and secretly

wore, for mourning, a bit of black ribbon around his arm for a week. He was more devoted, and held longer to his dead loves than to those who were living, for he was as fickle in his early loves as in those of later years. He loved, perhaps, less discriminately and wisely at that period than at the present. Young maids and old maids, wives and mothers even, were alike the subjects of his regard. He carved unnatural, appearing hearts and darts, and undecipherable initials, on the smooth bark of maple and birch trees, as evidences of his affection for the fair one the initials of whose name were supposed to be inextricably entwined with his own. The carved devices became at length so numerous that the neighbors who passed through the forest observed them, and wondered what they were for, and who had cut them. They talked about them, and concluded that they were Masonic signs, and of course meant no good to those dwelling near. The schoolboys believed they were done by the ghost of a man, of whom tradition said — speaking through their grandmothers — he had been murdered by his rival for loving the young lady to whom said murderer was betrothed. This belief was also held by the young ladies who attended the district school. At last the woods became a fearful spot, and no one except my neighbor the poet dared to venture there after dark. But he still went there, and added to his business of carving hearts, darts, and initials, that of cutting, in a like manner, billing doves and the single word Love.

At last, one day, a prying, anxious maiden lady, who had been loved by the boy and cast aside for one newer and younger, caught my neighbor the poet at work. From that hour his occupation was gone; and though people laughed at and jeered him, yet they thought him a genius, and told him as much. Then our poet began to write verse, and was frequently called upon to compose epitaphs, which he did very cleverly, embroidering them with drawings of urns, and extinguished torches, and weeping-willows. When

the schoolmaster died, however, he waggishly introduced a birch-tree, instead of the customary willow, as being more suggestive of his calling; and the stone-cutter actually carved it on the marble. Whenever schoolboys visit the old master's grave, they turn away with streaming eyes and a sense of tingling running down their backs. So much for the youth of my neighbor the poet.

VII.

PRUDENCE AND TEMPERANCE JONES.

MY neighbors who reside in the corner-house down the street, on the opposite side of the way from my chambers, are two somewhat antiquated maiden ladies, bearing the name of Jones. They have the fortune to be twin sisters, and were baptized, something more than half a century ago, Prudence and Temperance. Of course, being a bachelor, I do not pretend to know much concerning certain matters; but it has always appeared to me that the fact of their being twins must have been the result of an accident. I believe that twins ought, in some way to resemble one another; but except the circumstance that each of them is single, — unmarried, — I cannot discern any point of resemblance between them. They are as dissimilar as the equator and the poles.

Prudence is tall and thin; has unruly light-red hair, that never will lie smoothly, and small gray eyes, that never stand still. She is supplied with an abundance of freckles, and a scarcity of teeth. Her tongue, probably, is forked, and her chief food, doubtless, is pickles and bitter-almonds.

Temperance is short and fleshy. She has dark-brown hair, and large, black eyes. She is poorly provided in the item of freckles, but owns a large mole on her left cheek. She still retains her full complement of teeth, and has the knack of cracking walnuts with them equal to a squirrel. Her tongue, probably, is rounded at the end, and her food consists of strawberry tarts and wild honey.

Both are devoted church-women, — though Prudence is a zealous Puseyite, and Temperance an easy-going follower

of the low-church party. The former preaches up the Thirty-nine Articles, and the latter endeavors to live up to the Ten Commandments. The first talks about the Apostolic succession, and the last seeks to walk in the Apostles' footsteps. The one spends a great part of her leisure hours embroidering crosses, crosiers, and candlesticks, with silk floss on strips of ribbon for book-marks, as presents to favorite clergymen — (and it is a little singular that her favorites are all unmarried); the other passes an equal portion of time in making calico dresses for colored children, and in knitting worsted socks for white babies. Prudence denounces as Dissenters all those who turn their eyes from the glittering cross which surmounts *the* church; while Temperance amicably fraternizes with all other sects, and even joins her Methodist sisters at love-feasts. When the parson — who, I am privileged to say, adopts neither high nor low church principles, but pursues the even tenor of a Christian's way — makes a parochial call on the twins, he comes out of their dwelling a wonderfully ill-used man. I think he is shy of their society, and would willingly limit his visits to their hospitable dwelling to one a year. But fate and feminine stratagem, combined, are too powerful for my friend the parson to resist, and in consequence he finds himself much oftener their guest than he would be if left to his own device. They take him prisoner whenever they can find him unengaged. They waylay him at the corners of the streets. They carry him off from weddings and funerals. They get up "tea-squalls" in compliment to him, and celebrate his birthday by presenting him with velvet slippers and gilt-edged editions of the common prayer-book.

Yet, for all this, each declares in the most solemn manner, with her hand placed tremblingly over her heart, that the felicities and infelicities of married life are not for her, but that she simply desires to be let alone. And I have every reason to believe that their wishes in this particular will be granted.

Jack sometimes calls on my maiden friends, notwithstanding they receive and treat him with much coolness. The account which Mrs. P. has given to them of Jack's habits has not prepossessed them at all in his favor. Indeed they have learned by their own observation that he is inclined to be irregular and wild, — proceedings which they think exceedingly unbecoming and disreputable in a married and family man. Last New-Year's day, after Jack had freely partaken of the liquors that are dispensed at the "Beautiful Gates," he called on the gemini, as he is accustomed to term them, accompanied by three of his boon companions, who, equally with himself, were in high spirits. Their behavior, to say the least, was indecorous. They wore their hats during the entire call, and pleaded, as their reason for so doing, that they were of Quaker descent, and desired to keep in remembrance on that day, by this act, the custom of their forefathers.

After the revellers had gone, the ladies — very properly, I think — ordered the servant to take the four chairs which had been occupied by Jack and his friends, into the back-yard, and fumigate them with brimstone; "and then," said Miss Prudence, "when you return them to the house, *camphire* them well with camphor."

Of course, my feminine friends' ideas of cleanliness are extreme. A flake of dust is never seen in their dwelling. The motes which dance in the flickering sunshine in other homes, dare not show themselves in the home of the spinsters. Nothing that can make dust or noise is tolerated by them. The little maid-of-all-work, named Bettina, of German descent, whom they took from the Orphan Asylum, to bring up, puts off her leather shoes, in which she does her street errands, at the kitchen's outer door, and puts on list slippers, in which to go about the house. No cat, nor dog, nor parrot, nor canary, ever disturbs the repose of the household. Only now and then, when a mouse is heard nibbling behind the wainscot, a neighbor's cat is borrowed.

for a few hours, until the mouse is either killed or frightened away. Strangers, however, who visit the house, hear with startling distinctness, breaking the otherwise deep silence, the loud ticking of the Dutch cuckoo clock in the hall. Day and night, for years, its voice has not ceased; but the spinsters heed it not, nor appear to hear it, although, according to my neighbor the poet, it ever utters and repeats these two words of warning and advice: "Single, mingle! mingle, single!" and which he has employed as a refrain in a song composed by himself, entitled "The Spinsters' Clock."

My two maiden friends come of a good stock. Their lamented father, who died some twenty years since, was a gentleman of the old school, and wrote M. D. after his name. He was extremely popular with the ladies, and they, perhaps more than the men, missed him when he took his departure. The poet wrote some verses about him, which I here subjoin: —

THE DOCTOR.

He was a portly man to view,
  Rotund in form and short in stature;
His stomach measured three feet through,
  And cast his feet quite into shadow.
His dress was of the olden mode, —
  Black stockings, buckles, and knee-breeches;
His seals of gold and watch-keys showed
  A tendency to worldly riches.

His voice was low, and soft in tone;
  His chin was shaved close as a whistle;
His head was bald, and eke it shone
  As shines a polished piece of gristle
He rode about from place to place,
  Within a gig most softly padded,
And, like a cabbage-rose, his face
  Shone o'er the dash-board of his carriage.

His office fronted on the green,
  Two doors beyond the village tavern;

The blacksmith's shanty rose between,
A something 'twixt a house and cavern.
The doctor loved a social glass,
Therefore he found the tavern handy,
And by the forge he ne'er could pass,
Unless he asked the smith to brandy.

The doctor had his failing, — well!
We all do err in some direction;
For since the hour that Adam fell
Humanity has lost perfection.
And if he liked to drain the bowl
More than was good for health or reason,
He had excuses — dear old soul! —
He worked so hard through every season

So many daily calls he had,
So much to do, so far to travel;
The roads were often shocking bad,
And deep with mud, or loose with gravel.
And then — ah! yes — those calls at night
Were trying to his constitution.
Poor women! they unnerved him quite,
Unless he took a strong solution.

The doctor had a comely wife;
Full forty years with him she 'd tarried;
And two sweet girls had made his life
A very Eden since he married.
Their youthful days, alas! were gone,
But still they graced the doctor's dwelling, —
Two modest maidens, all forlorn,
Whose charms long since were past the selling.

And yet they smiled and curled their hair,
And talked of ribbons, beaux, and laces;
They practised many a girlish air,
And studied many childish graces.
They shunned their mirror, though, and gave
To Heaven the time once spent before it;
The doctor said their souls 't would save,
If Providence did not ignore it.

The doctor's wife was somewhat proud,
Proud of her good man's wit and knowledge,

And proud that all the village bowed
To him because he 'd been to college.
And he was proud of her in turn,
Proud of her beauty, though 't was faded,
Proud because she could still discern
The finest print with eyes unaided.

And when together, free from care,
To church they walked on Sunday mornings,
They were, in sooth, a courtly pair,
And picturesque in their adornings.
His ruffles and three-cornered hat,
Her turban with its plume of yellow,
Made them appear as if they 'd sat
For an old painting, rich and mellow.

An honest man he lived and died;
And though he joked, he loved the Bible;
The golden rule was e'er his guide,
Nor was he sued for debt or libel.
The poor man ever found him true;
The rich man never hollow-hearted;
And all the ladies thought he knew
More knowledge than the schools imparted.

And so he lived, and so he died,
A model man — except his drinking;
And many a bride and mother cried,
When told that he was "slowly sinking."
His wife outlived him just a year,
But still his daughters linger after,
And o'er his grave shed many a tear,
And oft recall his jocund laughter.

Portraits of the good doctor and his wife, in their "picturesque adornings," hang on the walls of my neighbors the spinsters' dwelling; and on each recurring anniversary of the originals' marriage, many of the olden settlers in the village call to look at them. At such time the twins, arrayed in their most costly gowns, delight to speak of the excellences of their parents.

VIII.

MR. AND MRS. POTTS HAVE A LITTLE DISCUSSION.

"NO, sir," I heard my neighbor, Mrs. Potts, through the thin partition which separated our chambers, exclaim, early one morning to her liege lord; "I have set my face dead against that thing, and neither you nor any other man can make me yield a single inch."

"But, my dear" —

"No, sir, you need n't use any buts," interrupted Mrs. P.; "and as for calling me your dear, why it will not do one bit of good."

"Well, listen then to reason," said Jack, "and I'll prove" —

"No, sir, I won't listen to reason, and you can't prove anything that will convince" —

"Well, have your own way, Mrs. Potts, and be as stubborn as usual."

"Stubborn!" screamed Mrs. P. "I should just like to know which is the more so, you or I. I know well enough how I've yielded and yielded to you ever since Phœbe Jane was born, — and that is seven years ago come Christmas day, — and such sicknesses as she has lived through, too, are enough to make you weep; but you are a hard-hearted man, and I only wish that you had, as the poor child has had, the scarlet fever, and the whooping-cough, and the mumps, and the measles, which your long-legged friend in the next room gave to her."

"And the seven years" —

"Oh, you need n't," interrupted Mrs. Potts, "say any-

thing about that. What if my dear, unfortunate brother did give it to her, is that any reason, I want to know, why you should throw it into my face? But you take delight, John Potts, in casting slurs on my family, and I should really like to know if it is n't quite as good as your family? Did n't your uncle have the small-pox? and was n't your grandfather" —

"Hung, Mrs. Potts," shouted Jack; "yes, hung because he was true to his country, and hated kings and tyranny."

"He was a rebel and a spy, sir, and was rightly served. Oh, I am thankful that none of my blood was ever hung."

"Many who die in their beds, Mrs. Potts, are more dishonored in their death than was my brave grandfather."

"Oh, I know what you mean by your vile insinuation, Mr. P.; but it is false, sir; my aunt never poisoned herself; and she was as virtuous as — as — you are yourself, Mr. Potts."

"Very likely," answered Jack; "and now, Mrs. Potts, once for all, will or will you not go with me to New York?"

"No!"

"Then, Mrs. P., I'll go without you."

"Go if you dare."

"I dare," said the heroic Jack; and straightway he leaped from his bed, and, crossing the chamber to the door, he unlocked and opened it so quickly that, at first, I really thought he was intending to start immediately in *grand deshabille*, but he only called for hot water, and then proceeded deliberately to dress himself.

After a short pause, Jack continued, "While I am absent, my love, you may address your letters for me to Delmonico's, where I shall probably have a room, though my meals will be taken elsewhere."

"None but gypsies and Arabs, Mr. Potts, adopt such method. Christian people always eat where they sleep; and I thank Heaven that I am a Christian woman and not a Hottentot."

"Certainly, my dear — certainly; but for my part, I study my convenience in the matter, and shall breakfast, and dine, and tea, wherever I may see fit."

"Mr. Potts, you are a Hottentot."

"Humph!" ejaculated Jack.

Then another pause ensued. At last Mrs. P. asked, —

"Had n't I better keep a journal, and send you a daily report of my movements, Mr. Potts?"

"Oh, no, my dear, that will not be necessary, for I shall speak to our neighbor in the next room to keep an eye on you, and report to me if anything extraordinary occurs."

"A pretty thing that would be for you to do, Mr. Potts, — set a spy to watch your wife; but your family, I remember, is famous for its spies; — you cruel man, you." And Mrs. P. wept. Jack was silent.

At length he broke the silence by asking Mrs. Potts to tell him where he could find his valise. Mrs. P. actually refused to tell.

"Then," exclaimed Jack, "I 'll take the large trunk. Do you know, my love," he went on, "that a traveller with a large trunk is treated with greater respect than is the chap who travels with only a carpet-bag?"

Mrs. Potts said that she did not, but considered it probable.

"Well, now, my dear," said Jack, "if you will but consent to go with me, I shall have no difficulty in filling the trunk, for your dresses, you know, take up much room. Come, say that you 'll go."

"No, John Potts; I 've told you over and over that I will not, and you know very well that I cannot."

"Why?" asked John.

"Why! because, in the first place," answered Mrs. P., "I have n't a thing to wear. In the next place, I could n't get ready under two weeks; then how can I in two hours? In the next place, who, I should just like to know, would take care of the children, and Phœbe Jane with such a

dreadful cold in her head as she has? Their grandmother! Mr. Potts, you are, without exception, the most inconsiderate man I ever knew, — as if my dear mother had n't had trouble enough with raising one set of children, without my pestering her with mine. Take them with me, then! Mr. Potts, you are a fool! — why, I could n't get them ready under two years; besides, when I go a-visiting I don't want to be bothered with children. I am tugged and hugged to death with them enough at home, without carrying them off to New York, for them to hug and tug me to death there; no, I just won't do it. In the next place, as I was saying, I don't want to go myself; and in the last place, I won't go. But what under the sun, Mr. Potts, do you mean by putting into the trunk the wash-bowl and pitcher? and, I declare, if you have n't got my double-expansion skirt in it, and — Mr. Potts you sha'n't put in the pillow, now, that 's so." And I immediately heard Mr. and Mrs. P. tussling over the pillows. After a short and silent struggle, Mrs. Potts exclaimed, "You mean, cruel wretch! but you have n't got this one." Then, after thrusting the other pillow into the trunk, I heard the "mean, cruel wretch" lock it, exclaiming, as he did, "Now, thank fortune! it is full." And then he whistled, most provokingly, "Home, *sweet* home," with variations, and proceeded to blacken his boots. Mrs. P. bore it patiently for some time, but at last exclaimed, "I should think that you would be ashamed of yourself to whistle in such a violent manner when you know what an awful headache I have. But you don't care for me, Mr. Potts, now; though there was a time when I thought you did."

Jack ceased whistling.

"You know, my dear," he said, "that I do care for you."

"No, I don't, Mr. Potts."

"But I say that I do, Mrs. Potts." And Jack enforced his assertion by kissing her.

Mrs. Potts sighed audibly.

"Do you think, my dear," he continued, "that I have forgotten the days of our courtship; when I used to go, night after night, over the worst road in the whole county, three miles and more, to your mother's, to see you? And did n't I love you then; and don't I love you now with my whole heart? To be sure I do. And where is the woman," continued Jack, stopping his work and gesticulating with his empty boot, "from whom I would bear as much as I do from you, and for whom I would do so much to serve and please?"

Mrs. Potts suggested Miss Prudence Jones.

"No, Mrs. Potts, you know better. Do I ever buy silk dresses for Prudence Jones when I go to New York, as I always do for you? Answer me that, if you please!"

Mrs. P., decidedly mollified, replied, "Well, no!"

"And that reminds me," said Jack, "to ask you what kind of silk I shall bring you when I return?"

"I think that a brown *moire antique*," answered Mrs. P., in a cheerful tone, "would be the most becoming for me, my dear; and remember to get enough for a double skirt, and also a piece of ribbon for the trimming, — a wide, heavy ribbon, of the same color as the dress, — and you may as well have it plaited, so that I shall have less trouble with it when the dressmaker comes to put it on."

Jack promised to attend to it as directed, and then, with Mrs. P., who in the mean time had dressed, proceeded down-stairs to breakfast.

Shortly afterward a carriage called for Jack and his trunk; when he, after kissing his wife, and running up-stairs to the nursery to bid Phœbe Jane, and little Jacky, and the others, good-bye, entered it, and was driven rapidly to the railway station. As Mrs. Potts closed the front door, after his departure, I heard her say to herself, as she ascended the stairs, "Well, after all, Jack is a dear, good fellow; and if he will only bring me that brown *moire antique*, why, I sha'n't care that he has gone without me.

Betty," she continued, calling to the servant, "take the children down-stairs, and give them their breakfast. See that Phœbe Jane has on her flannel skirt, and that little Jacky has n't got his pantaloons on hind-side before; and, Betty," — "Yes, marm," exclaimed Betty, — "As I am not very well this morning, I think that you had better bring up to me, from the cellar, a bottle of Scotch ale; and, Betty, tell the butcher when he calls to bring some nice lamb-chops for dinner; and — well, that is all at present, Betty."

"Yes, marm," replied Betty, and descended the stairs with the children. Mrs. Potts went into her room, and I, taking my hat, went out to the "Beautiful Gates" to breakfast.

As I sat over my buttered toast and coffee, I said to myself, "It was a fortunate day for you, William Finch, when Katrina Vander Heyden, *née* Higginbotham, said 'No' in answer to a certain question you put to her many and many a year ago. You 've seen fortunate days since then, William-boy, but that day, believe me, was the most fortunate of all. You have escaped a good deal of misery, I am inclined to think, by not marrying. You are free to go and come when you choose. You have no Mrs. Finch to find fault with nor scold you. You have no Phœbe Jane to be afflicted with colds in the head. You have no little Jacky for whom to buy candies. You have no Billys nor Bettys to keep in trousers and flannel petticoats. You have, in short, no one but yourself to look after, and you are in fact a lucky dog, and you ought to be a happy fellow; but, William Finch, I regret to say, that you are neither the one nor the other. You would give all your boasted independence of speech, all your freedom of action, all your bachelor days of ease and nights of gayety for one month of even such a life as Jack Potts leads; for then you would have, if not a wife, — though I would not assert that Mrs. Potts does not love Jack, — at least children who

would love you and cling to you, and for whom your heart would beat and your hands labor day and night. It was a dark day for you, William Finch, when Katrina turned away from you her face and answered No; and you are well aware of it, and grieve that it is so. For you no household-hearth blazes, no woman calls you husband, and no children clamber upon your knees and lisp the name father to you. Alas!" I said to myself, "William Finch, this is even so."

Just at that moment the waiter brought to me the morning paper. Mechanically I opened it and turned to the list of marriages, half hoping to find my own among them; but, alas! it was not there. So finishing my coffee, which had grown cold, I departed. I walked past Hanky Vander Heyden's house, and though I did not see Katrina's face at the window, I yet heard her voice rebuking — not scolding, for that she never does — him for some sin of omission, and I could not but feel thankful that it was Hanky, and not I, who was receiving the reproof. When I reached home, by the aid of my pipe, I soon smoked myself into my usual state of contentment, and resolved to be satisfied with my place in life, neither envying the infelicities of Jack Potts, nor the felicities of Hanky Vander Heyden; resolved, too, not to spend my days like the poet, O. Philander Coe, in making love, which might terminate either in a felicity or an infelicity; but rather dwell contentedly, like my maiden neighbors, who desire neither the one nor the other; and henceforth, leaving my neighbors to manage their own affairs, look out solely for the prosperity and comfort of William Finch, Esquire.

DOWN IN THE VALLEY.

I.

COUSIN KATE.— HER MATRIMONIAL VIEWS.— HER AGE.— SOME ONE'S DISAPPOINTMENT. — MY EMPLOYMENT. — THE COMMUNITY. — MISSIONARY FRIENDS. — HISTORICAL SOCIETY. — ANTIQUARIAN ASSOCIATION. — KATE'S PLAINNESS. — HER POSITION.

I DWELL down in the valley. Not, however, entirely alone. My cousin Kate keeps house for me, and I have a son — a lad of twelve years — who passes his school-vacations with me. It is my misfortune to be a widower. Ten years have elapsed since I laid my young wife to rest, and came hither to dwell in the valley.

Cousin Kate accompanied me. She was younger then than she is now, and my new neighbors spoke some curious and uncharitable things concerning us. Kate, brave girl! heeded not their sayings, but strove to make cheerful my wifeless home, and to tenderly care for my motherless boy. And well has she succeeded. If any one should ask me who, in all the world, I love the best, I would, if I thought fit to answer the question, say cousin Kate; and I believe, if Kate were asked the like question, that her reply would be cousin Paul. I am cousin Paul. Nor would it appear at all strange to me that she should thus say. I am aware that she has refused many excellent offers of marriage within the last few years, because, as she one day in a confidential moment told me, she could not think of deserting me and my twelve-years oldling.

Not that Kate and I are, as all the gossips are ready to declare, the least bit in love with each other; or have, indeed, the slightest thoughts of marrying. No, we are too well satisfied with our present mode of life to desire any change. We each have our own peculiar views in regard to matrimonial bliss. We know something about its felicities and infelicities. Kate, particularly, looks on it in no very favorable light. I often reproach her for want of feeling, and accuse her of coldness; at the same time I seek to portray the many excellences and beauties which surround the marriage state. But no sooner do I close my remarks, than she shakes her head and laughs, and advises me to take up Cupid's bow and arrows, and go about the country, as Love's champion, exhorting boarding-school misses and girls who study the ladies' magazines. For her part, she is too old, she says, to listen to the nonsense lovers talk; and I, she should think, were too wise to utter it. To tell the truth, Kate is older than I, by some three, four, five, or even more years. I cannot tell the exact number, but enough, at all events, to give her the right — so she thinks — to advise me now and then, and which advice she hopes I will try to profit by. Though Kate is approaching the sear and yellow leaf, still does she retain most wonderfully her youthful ways and spirits; yet is she dignified withal, and moves, in the performance of her household duties, with a matronly grace. But, as I said before, she is older than I in regard to years, and, I often think, even in regard to wit and worth.

I am not certain that cousin Kate ever has loved. Often have I been on the point of asking her the question; but somehow the words refused to come forth, and I could only beat with my fingers, on the arm of my easy-chair, an accompaniment to something my heart was beating. The truth is, I dared not ask her. I remembered of hearing a story told, when quite a lad, of a disappointment, I think it was called; and that somebody somehow married, some-

where, some one else, or something of that kind, though the exact merits of the story I never properly understood Whether or not Kate had anything to do with it I cannot positively say; but, at all events, Kate never was, and is not, and says she will never be, married; and so it is that she and I — old maid and widower — dwell together very pleasantly in my cottage down in the valley.

Cousin Kate and I are not, however, without friends, who occasionally pass an hour or more with us. Very good sort of persons, too, they are, — not entirely given up to the fashions and frivolities of the age, but possessing much good sense and kindness of heart. They — more particularly Kate's friends — love to drop in on us of summer afternoons, — the old ladies with their knitting, the younger ones with sewing or embroidery, — to talk to Kate, with wonderful zest and volubility, of all matters and things under the sun. Sometimes when they are discoursing on metaphysics, and get a trifle beyond their depth, they will appeal to me to set them right; but oftenest my assistance is not invoked, and I, in my cosy apartment, sit listening to them — at times occupied with my cigar, or engaged in translating an ode from Horace for the "Quarterly Review," or doing a love-poem for the "Atlantic," or some other equally light and profitable employment. They have great ideas — have these olden ladies — of my wisdom and astuteness. I have been told that they consider me, in some respects, superior — especially as regards the solidity of my learning — to even the great and famous, the Rev. Dr. Bunsby, who, years ago, was the Professor of Astrology in one of our oldest colleges. The rusty suit of black which, usually, I wear, adds not a little, I think, to the impression they have of my erudition. Not that I am at all untidy or neglectful of my personal appearance, — for cousin Kate would not, for a single hour, tolerate in me any such piece of foolishness, — but that, somehow or other, there is an air of great learning surrounding and emanating from that

rusty and antique suit of mine. The younger ladies, however, do not regard me with the veneration with which the minds of their elders are filled. The feeling they entertain for me is one of admiration. I write verses in their albums, and indite songs for them to sing.

The community generally look on me as a somewhat privileged individual. They pay me unwonted honors. They expect me on "Fourth of Julys" to be the orator of the day. They regard my opinions concerning the Union, the American Eagle, and the Star-Spangled Banner, as sound and constitutional. I stand almost as high in their esteem as does a militia captain, or, possibly, a major of dragoons. The whole matter is founded in my literary attainments. They take me to be a scholar — one fully posted in all things relating to common schools, academies, and colleges.

Owing to my literary proclivities, I have various works in strange languages — books in Hebrew, Chinese, and Hindu dialects — sent to me by zealous friends, principally missionaries, who trust that I will take "great delight," as they express it, in reading them. Several members of the Historical Society have, at different times, forwarded me curious and interesting manuscripts, pertaining to the Revolutionary War, for perusal. The old Red Sandstone Antiquarian Association, a short time since, dispatched to me by a trustworthy member, for inspection, three corroded copper nails, and at the same time politely invited me to "get up" a paper in relation to them, to read before the members at their next annual meeting in January. From our worthy representative in Congress I receive many government documents, that reach me through the post-office, and, occupying as they do much space in the United States mail-bags, prove a fruitful theme for discussion among the frequenters of the office, and undoubtedly are great levers in elevating me into notice, and giving me the reputation for wisdom and knowledge which I possess. To confess

the truth, however, I have but very little of the sageness which my contemporaries are pleased to attribute to me. Cousin Kate knows thrice as much as I, and yet few give her credit for more than being able to speak her own mother-tongue correctly. The reason is, she is a woman, and neither sets herself up for a blue-stocking, nor yet "goes in" for woman's rights. Simply a true, noble-hearted, noble-minded woman is cousin Kate.

Cousin Kate could not possibly, even through any misunderstanding of the word, be termed beautiful. Kate herself would be the first to laugh at any one so venturesome as thus to call her. What she may have been in her palmy days it matters not either to her or to me. It is with the present alone I have to do, not with the past. To be sure, there are rumors — faint and idle rumors — which sometimes reach my ears, of a peerless beauty who, for some few summers, was the reigning queen at the watering-places, and, during the winters, the acknowledged belle of the city where she dwelt. Whether Kate was ever this "Queen of Beauty," I will leave for others to tell; but if she were, then disease more than age has scarred and seamed the face once fair and smooth. To-day Kate is plain — plain beyond any sort of doubt. The plainness of her features, too, is of that description which, when beheld for the first time, calls forth our pity, but afterwards, grown familiar to us, we are apt to wonder how it was that feelings of such a nature could possibly have possessed our hearts, and we are only surprised that something akin to veneration had not arisen in its stead. Every one down in the valley loves and respects cousin Kate.

Few of the gentler sex who live in the valley play a more conspicuous part in the humble life therein than Kate. She is first directress of the Sewing Society; head manageress of the "Orphan's Home," — a capital institution, possessing a charter derived from the State, and having a constitution and by-laws got up expressly for it by

myself. She is the instigator of and the prime mover in the winter's fairs and the summer's strawberry festivals. No picnic would be pleasant unless she had a hand in it, and no *tableau* perfect without her assistance. Kate, too, is the acknowledged leader of fashion among the ladies of the village; and to her are referred all questions pertaining to *la mode.* Whenever she goes to the city, she returns with her trunks filled with paper patterns of all the late styles of attire relating to a lady's wardrobe, from the head-dress down to the gaiters. Notwithstanding Kate is the oracle whose directions the milliner and dressmaker follow implicitly, yet she does not herself dress in the height of fashion. There is a middle course which Kate, wisely, I think, adopts. To sum up, cousin Kate is a woman of excellent judgment, of exquisite taste, and great kindness of heart; in short, —

> "A creature, not too bright or good
> For human nature's daily food;
> For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
> Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles."

II.

GREGORY GRUMM. — HIS PERSONAL APPEARANCE. — HIS AFFAIRS AND MINE. — IN THE SAME BOAT. — "ALLENDALE." — "THE HEMLOCKS." — GREGORY'S WHIM. — HIS ACTS OF KINDNESS. — FRED'S LETTER. — WHY HE HAS A VACATION. — MONEY.

I HAVE an ancient bachelor friend, Gregory Grumm, who terms himself the last of the old guard, and who apparently is a cynical dog, always finding fault with his neighbors, and grumbling at the stupidity of the world at large. His faith in the felicities of matrimony is extremely slight, and he never lets an occasion pass of railing against that sacred institution. Gregory's personal appearance is by no means prepossessing. He is a large, fat man, and bald on the top of his head. This sign, however, with which Time has marked him for his own, is, when out-of-doors, effectually hidden from prying eyes by the white fur hat which, both summer and winter, distinguishes Gregory from his neighbors. My old friend carries an eye-glass, and sports an ivory-headed cane. His eyes are large and black; his nose is a Roman one, of kingly dimensions. His teeth are his own, and as white and sound as they were thirty years ago. A complete suit of nankin clothes Gregory from head to foot, and fits him as close as his gloves, — which are of a similar shade, only one size too small for his hands, — and, in consequence, he is continually bursting out in unusual and unnecessary places, much to his annoyance and displeasure. The truth is, Gregory has outgrown his clothes, and, having no wife to direct him to the tailor's, has gone on, summer after sum-

mer, wearing his well-preserved nankins till his increasing size has stretched them to their extremest capacity. I am afraid that, some day, my friend will meet with a terrible calamity, and perhaps be brought home wrapped in a borrowed duster, or some good young lady's hooped skirts.

Viewed from a distance, Gregory resembles, somewhat, a huge, pineapple-shaped cheese, and rolls, when he walks, like a Dutch galliot in a storm at sea. Notwithstanding that the greater preponderance of his bulk is enveloped in that portion of nankin which he sports below his waistbands, still, with his red neck-tie, whose ends stream in the wind, and his gray moustache, which forms a pent-roof over his capacious mouth, Gregory Grumm is rather a picturesque individual; while his annual income of ten thousand dollars enables him to be as eccentric as he likes. Gregory never interferes with any one's business except his own and mine. With the former he is continually making the most incomprehensible changes. No matter how well his affairs may be progressing, he is sure, just at the wrong moment, to give some false direction to, or effect an alteration in, his best-concocted plans; thereby causing the direst confusion. Then it immediately becomes his greatest pleasure to remedy the evil.

As for my own affairs, according to Gregory's views, there is nothing I do properly, unless with his knowledge and approval. To humor my old friend, therefore, I consult with him, whenever we meet, in regard to my little speculations and affairs, and then, as every independent citizen should, pursue that course which in my judgment seemeth the wisest.

Years ago, when Gregory was a young man, he and I sailed together in the same canoe. It was hard work at first, for the tide was dead against us; but we possessed strong arms and willing hearts, and made our voyages seem short, cheering each other with gay songs and merry stories. To speak somewhat plainer, Gregory and I were

clerks together in a shipping-house, and we worked, standing side by side, at a big desk, pen in hand, from early to late, day after day and year after year, till at length, through the death and retirement of the heads of the firm, we succeeded to the business. And so, resting on our oars, but still holding the tiller, we floated together onward with the tide. When therefore, one day, I said to Gregory that I thought of leaving him, and going down into the valley, he sneered at me, and called me a fool; but, nevertheless, declared that he would go with me. So we left the boat, floating with the current, in other hands, and, taking our wallets with us, — Gregory declared there was not half enough in them, and that both of us would be inmates of a poor-house before a year had passed, — stepped on shore, and passed down into the valley; where, finding the place "Allen-Dale" without an occupant, I bought it, though Gregory grumbled thereat, because of its name, which he called stupid, not to say romantic, and advised me to change it to "Saint Matthew's Place," or the "Garden of Eden," or anything, in short, that meant something. But I firmly refused to comply, and so the spot is "Allen-Dale" to this day. As for Gregory, he purchased, near by, an acre of ground, on which he built for himself a house, in which, with his black servant Pompey, — who studies his master's whims, and gets for him his daily meals, — he lives. The children down in the valley, call the house "The Lion's Den," and its growling proprietor "The Roaring Lion." He, however, terms the place "The Hemlocks," though there are no hemlocks within a mile of it. He says the name is as good as any, and that he likes it, and, moreover, he will have it this and nothing else. Therefore it is that my friend Gregory Grumm inhabits "The Hemlocks." He is very particular, too, that his correspondents should address their communications for him to that particular locality; nor will he take a letter from the post-office unless it be so superscribed.

I knew once of his leaving a letter lying there a week because it was lacking in this matter; but the whim proved an expensive one, as he lost, by the delay in not receiving the same, nearly a thousand dollars. To prevent any such accident from occurring in the future, and yet, at the same time, have his whim gratified, he made a private arrangement with the postmaster, whereby all letters addressed to him, not having this important word upon them, should receive it from the pen of the P. M. himself — imitating, as near as possible, the handwriting of the other portion of the letter's superscription — before being placed in his appropriate box. By this nice management all difficulty is obviated, and though Gregory does not always receive his letters quite so soon as he otherwise would, yet is his temper no longer ruffled, his wishes are satisfied, and the postmaster thereby receives considerable addition to his small emolument.

Though to the world Gregory Grumm shows a rough outside, yet his heart is a tender one. He will abuse a beggar unmercifully, and drive him with opprobrious epithets from his door, but, ere he is out of hearing, will call him back and give him a dollar. He owns several tenement houses, from the inmates of which he exacts, to the uttermost mill, the amount of each quarter's rent; often, however, himself secretly supplying them with the means to meet it. He shakes his cane at the boys in the valley, as he passes through the street, and frowns severely at the little girls; but he gives the former three-cent pieces and fire-crackers at Christmas and Fourth of July, and sends to the latter dolls and torpedoes on the same anniversaries. That Gregory, though belonging to no church or sect, is, in the true acceptation of the term, a Christian, not one of the clergymen of the various denominations having place down in the valley will deny. If their larders contain fatter turkeys or larger sirloins of beef than is usual, or their cellars more mealy potatoes,

or rosier-cheeked apples than is common, or their out-houses cleaner tons of coal, or higher piles of fire-wood, than is often seen, — it is because Gregory Grumm has had the ordering and paying for all these things. And yet he does not often go to hear them preach, but remains, Sunday after Sunday, at home, reading some printed sermons, of which many have a place on the shelves of his library.

There is one being in the world, and only one, to whom Gregory Grumm never addresses a cross or bitter word. Cousin Kate herself does not always escape his sarcastic remarks; but my son Fred is his pet and admiration. Fred can do anything with Uncle Gregory, as he was taught to call him, and his love of mischief often leads him to commit acts which no one, loving him less than does Gregory, could or would overlook and forgive. Fred, the scamp, knows this, and takes advantage of it to play a hundred tricks on Uncle Gregory, for his own and others' gratification, which not only makes me ashamed of, but likewise angry at him. When, however, I would rebuke and punish him for so doing, Gregory will stop me, saying, "Fy, fy! the lad is young, Paul, and thoughtless; besides, the sly monkey knows that I am as much amused at his jokes as he is himself." So the boy goes unpunished, and becomes more daring every day. But he is absent from home now, at boarding-school, and I trust that, when he returns, he will be changed for the better, and, giving up his boyish pranks, will prove himself a model youth. I may look for him home soon — according to his last letter, which I subjoin — to pass the vacation, and shall then know whether or not he has improved in his behavior.

"*Prospect Hill Academy, July the* 10*th.*

"DEAR FATHER, — Hurrah! ain't you glad? we're going to have a vacation. The reason we are to have a vacation in the middle of the term is, that Mr. Penfield, the writing-master, is going away to be married, and Mr.

Lightman has got a crick in his back, which he caught while lying on the grass, one night, looking for the comet through his spy-glass. So the head teacher, Mr. Ferule, said, as it was such warm weather now, and the boys went to sleep so much of afternoons in the school-room, and did n't study none, that he guessed he 'd give us a week's vacation, and he hoped we 'd recruit up in that time, and come back not so lazy, and study hard. The biggest boy in school, John Growsy by name, said he guessed that old Ferule wanted to go to the wedding himself; and that 's what I guess. What do you guess, and Uncle Gregory?

"Oh! I most forgot to say I want some money to come home with, for what you sent me last month is all gone. I spent it for fire-crackers, and sea-serpents, and spinning-wheels, and them kind of things, on Fourth of July; and, crickey, what fun we did have! Little Billy Testy singed his eyebrows and front hair all off with some powder; and Georgy Groat he sat right down on a whole bunch of crackers, and burnt himself there dreadful. John Growsy put molasses and vinegar on it, and it helped him right away. I only burnt my nose a little, holding a lighted cracker between my teeth when it went off. Please don't forget to send the money. Send plenty of it, and then I 'll come home on Wednesday, sure. Tell Cousin Kate to have some mince-pies and strawberries for me, and for Uncle Gregory to buy me a knife and some fish-lines and hooks. Your affectionate son,

FRED.

"P. S. — Send the money in one-dollar bills, just as quick as you can."

III.

THE PONY; HIS COST. — FRED'S HEALTH. — SUMMERSETS. KATE SINGS; HER VOICE. — GREGORY'S GALLANTRY. KATE AN HEIRESS. — OUR ASTONISHMENT. — GREGORY'S ANGER. — FRED'S NAUGHTINESS; HIS PARDON. — ANOTHER LETTER FROM FRED.

FRED has come home. The day he was expected, my old friend Gregory drove me to the railroad station to meet him. We rode in an old-fashioned gig, behind a Shetland pony no larger than a Newfoundland dog, which Gregory had that day purchased expressly for Fred. Our appearance attracted considerable notice; for the pony was light, and Gregory somewhat heavy, — weighing perhaps a trifle less than two hundred, — and whenever he leaned back in his seat, the pony was forthwith lifted off his feet, so that many times it appeared doubtful whether pony would come down to the earth or go up in the air. I felt that we were running a great risk, and mentioned as much to Gregory, suggesting, at the same time, the propriety of my getting out to walk, which, as the thermometer marked only ninety-nine in the shade, would have been a very comfortable undertaking. Gregory laughed at me, however, and promised that he would see the balance of power kept in the pony's favor.

It may be that our turn-out attracted more attention than it otherwise would, owing to the contrast it exhibited between the horse Gregory usually drove — a black-coated animal, standing sixteen hands high in his shoes — and the present incumbent. One little fellow whom we met stopped us, and advised Gregory to exchange places with

the pony; which, though the plan was feasible enough, was neither relished nor followed by my worthy friend.

As we jogged slowly on, Gregory informed me that he bought the Shetland for a mere song, — somewhere about the cost of a bottle of brandy and a crust of bread, — of one Jasper Millikens, a large dealer in horses, dogs, and whiskey. Of course Millikens frequented the "Hammer and Tongs," — the name of the principal tavern down in the valley, — and was seldom, if ever, sober. The pony was warranted to be sound and gentle; a good goer, sure-footed, and easy to keep; free from faults, and six years old come next spring. Whether Patty — this is the name Gregory gave the pony, though why it should have a feminine appellation I know not — is all that was warranted, time will doubtless declare.

Gregory said that he thought riding the pony would not only benefit Fred's bodily health, but also improve his mental faculties. I told Gregory that the boy was well and hearty, nor needed exercise; but this only had the effect of violently exciting my friend, causing him to pull up his shirt-collar about his ears, to blow a terrific blast on his nose, — which last performance frightened the pony into a smart trot, — and to give his gray moustache such a twist as to nearly pull off his head; and at the same time to exclaim that the affair was none of mine, and that if he chose to buy a camel or a crocodile for Fred to ride, he should do so: besides, there was nothing so well calculated to preserve health as riding horseback. "Boys, as you know, Paul," he continued, in a somewhat calmer tone, "are at any moment liable to be attacked with measles or scarlet fever, or fits, or something of the kind; and it becomes us, as faithful guardians of their health, to ward off, by all means in our power, the approach of insidious disease. If proper care be taken of Fred during his days of boyhood, I should not be surprised, Paul, if he were one day to become as healthy and fleshy and good-looking as I am my-

self." And Gregory stroked his double chin with great satisfaction. We reached the station as the cars rattled up, and were there just in time to behold Fred, in his haste to reach home, leap from them, while yet under headway, and in consequence turn two complete summersets after his feet first touched the earth. But this was nothing in comparison with the summersets he got off when he arrived at Allen-Dale. It really seemed to me that the boy was crazed with delight. He shook Gregory fifty times, at least, by the hand; he kissed cousin Kate till her cheeks were red as roses; he climbed upon my knees, and whispered boyish words of love into my ears, and then suddenly darting away, would be off to look at his bedroom, or the library, or the parlors, to see what alterations, if any, had been made in them during his absence. Then he would rush to the stables to take care of the pony, filling his feed-box with oats, and speaking to him as though he thought that he could understand every word uttered.

In short, he was wild with joy, and could scarcely stop at the tea-table long enough to eat the raspberries and cream, and custards and sponge-cake, which cousin Kate had, with thoughtful care, prepared for him. Shortly after tea, Fred insisted that Kate should sit down at her seldom-used piano, to sing him one or two of the half-forgotten songs with which she had lulled him to sleep in the days of his baby-hood. When Kate was young, her voice was noted for its volume and sweetness; and now, though somewhat broken and lacking the fulness and roundness of tone it once possessed, yet in its faltering notes a pathos and tenderness dwell which its olden glory never knew. After Kate had sung several cradle-songs for Fred, and played some martial airs for Gregory, her voice and touch strengthened, the notes dropped more liquidly from her lips, and her fingers traversed more freely the keys; confidence in her own powers, half lost before, returned; and with more than her youthful spirit did she continue to sing and play. Turning

suddenly from a gay melody which she was rattling off, she struck the low notes of a prelude which she herself had scored, and with deep feeling, which brought a crowd of olden memories to my heart and suffused my eyes with tears, she sung, or rather chanted, a song, the words of which I had written years ago, entitled

SHIPS AT SEA.

I have ships that went to sea
More than fifty years ago;
None have yet come home to me,
But are sailing to and fro.
I have seen them in my sleep,
Plunging through the shoreless deep,
With tattered sails and battered hulls,
While around them screamed the gulls,
Flying low, flying low.

I have wondered why they stayed
From me, sailing round the world;
And I've said, "I'm half afraid
That their sails will ne'er be furled."
Great the treasures that they hold,
Silks, and plumes, and bars of gold;
While the spices which they bear
Fill with fragrance all the air,
As they sail, as they sail.

Ah! each sailor in the port
Knows that I have ships at sea,
Of the waves and winds the sport,
And the sailors pity me.
Oft they come and with me walk,
Cheering me with hopeful talk,
Till I put my fears aside,
And, contented, watch the tide
Rise and fall, rise and fall.

I have waited on the piers,
Gazing for them down the bay,
Days and nights for many years,
Till I turned heart-sick away.

But the pilots, when they land,
Stop and take me by the hand,
Saying, "You will live to see
Your proud vessels come from sea,
One and all, one and all."

So I never quite despair,
Nor let hope or courage fail;
And some day, when skies are fair,
Up the bay my ships will sail.
I shall buy then all I need, —
Prints to look at, books to read,
Horses, wines, and works of art, —
Everything except a heart.
That is lost, that is lost.

Once when I was pure and young,
Richer, too, than I am now,
Ere a cloud was o'er me flung,
Or a wrinkle creased my brow,
There was one whose heart was mine;
But she 's something now divine,
And though come my ships from sea,
They can bring no heart to me
Evermore, evermore.

As Kate ceased, I raised my eyes and looked at Gregory. He had entered the music-room, from the piazza, where he was promenading when she commenced the song, and now stood beside her, actually turning the leaves of music from which she was playing. I never had seen Gregory display so much gallantry. I have of late thought, however, that he brushes his coat with more than extra care, and gives a more graceful twirl to his moustache, whenever he calls on me at an hour wherein he is sure to encounter Kate, than at other times. He has certainly "spruced up" wonderfully since a year ago, when I for the first time informed him that Kate was in a small way an heiress, and owned stock in the Turnpike Company, and also was possessed of shares in the Aqueduct. Therefore it was that

this gallantry of Gregory made an impression on me, while the gravity of his demeanor and the courtly grace of his attitude had never, I am certain, been excelled by any one, save him, since the days of Sir Roger de Coverley. I was on the point of complimenting Gregory, when — possibly aware that he had stepped out of his usual character, and by being polite had laid himself open to attack from me, and fearing it — he turned his back abruptly on us, and displayed to our astonished sight a red silk handkerchief, pinned from his shoulders, on which was chalked in large letters, "Hurrah for Uncle Greg." Of course we laughed; we could not avoid it; when, facing quickly around, Gregory demanded, in a fierce tone of voice, to be informed of what, in the name of ten thousand hexameters, we were laughing at; that he did not come to Allen-Dale to be made a sport of; that he had done no more in turning over some sheets of namby-pamby music than the most consummate puppy and coxcomb would have been permitted to do, and that, also, without afterwards being laughed at for his pains; and turning on his heel as he spoke, he had the extreme pleasure, he said, of wishing us good-evening.

So, in spite of my entreaties for him to remain, and my offers to explain the matter, to which he turned a deaf ear, he seized his hat and cane, and, with the red handkerchief streaming behind him, departed. I watched him till he disappeared with flying colors around the corner; then bethinking me of Fred, — whose work, I knew very well, the whole thing was, — I told him to follow after Uncle Gregory and bring him back. But Fred was lying on the floor, and either was, or pretended to be, asleep. He appeared to be troubled, too, with a nightmare; for sounds of a suffocating nature seemed to come from his throat. At last, however, Fred started, and in a half-hour returned with Gregory, who looked gloomily savage, and growled and snarled through the entire evening at every one save Fred, who ventured to speak to him. So, after a few futile efforts

on my part at conversation with the occupant of "The Hemlocks," I sat down with Kate to a game of chess, which occupied us till Gregory, who was listening to Fred telling of his school and schoolmates, departed. When my old friend had left, I called Fred to my side and reproved him for the want of respect, and the naughtiness he had shown to his kind uncle, who dearly loved him, and was only too willing to overlook and forgive his many faults. But for my part, I said, I should punish such acts; and was proceeding to say more, and do something to that effect, when Fred drew from his pocket a slip of paper on which these words were written in pencil, —

"Don't punish the boy, Paul, for my sake.

G. G."

After reading this pardon, as it may be termed, I quietly dismissed Fred to bed, but resolved to have a talk with Gregory concerning the matter.

Fred has written a letter to his friend George Groat. He brought it to me for correction, but I told him it required none, and I trust the public will agree with me.

"*Down in the Valley, Allen-Dale Lodge, July 25th.*

"DEAR FRIEND GEORGEY, — I have been home now three days, and suppose you'd like to hear from me by this time. I have a pony, — my uncle Gregory gave him to me, — his color is white, and he has a long tail and silky mane, which I ride every day. I don't mean the mane, but the pony; though sometimes, when he goes fast, I hold on so tight around his neck that our Nancy — that's aunt Kate's little black girl — says I use his mane for a cushion, but she don't know much about riding. The pony is what uncle Gregory calls a 'racker'; and I tell you, when he's coming home from a long ride, just before feeding-time, he almost racks me to pieces; and I guess I burn and smart

about as much as you did when you sat right down on that bunch of fire-crackers, fourth of July.

"I seen little Billy Testy once since I came home, and his uncle did n't give him a live pony, only a rocking-horse, which he keeps up in his mother's garret. He was so mad when I showed him my pony that he cussed dreadful, and said he 'd go right straight home and cut off his horse's tail, and I guess he did, he was so mad.

"Now you must answer this letter right away, and tell me what you got.

"Your dutiful friend,

"FRED."

IV.

"THE GOLDEN-RULE SOCIETY;" THEIR DOINGS. — SOUP AND SOAP TICKETS. — THE ESQUIMAUX. — INSULT TO GREGORY. — LILLY WHITE. — A LITERARY TEA-FIGHT. NANCY. — MRS. AXSEY. — FRED'S ANNOYANCES; SKETCH OF HIS LIFE. — ARTISTICAL CRITICISM.

COUSIN KATE is "First Directress" of a sewing society, instituted some years since, down in the valley. The society is known under several distinct appellations. The members themselves speak of it as the "Golden-Rule Society." Gregory Grumm calls it the "Gossipery," while I term it the "Quackery." A good many bright plans, of which the world has heard and ultimately seen carried out, have originated in said society. Numberless secrets of great importance were in possession of its members long before the newspaper reporters got hold of them. The submarine telegraph was first suggested and talked about in this society. Crinoline and hoops were in use among the sisterhood several months before the Empress of all the French took to wearing them. The comet which it was predicted would destroy the world in June, was foretold by the knowing ones of the "Golden Rule" full two years previous, — though they were divided in their opinions as to whether it would strike the earth this year or next. Both sides agreed, however, in saying that, sooner or later, our planet would be used up in this particular way.

As to affairs of a trifling nature and purely of a private character, which actually are of no account to any one save the actors themselves, that sometimes have occurred even

in the best-regulated families, down in the valley, and over which it were to be hoped that charity would have covered its cloak, they have canvassed and investigated in secret sittings, with a zeal and perseverance worthy of a better cause. Still the society has accomplished some good things. During a late severe winter, soup-tickets were "all the go," and many mouths, which otherwise would have gone supperless to bed, were daily fed by the society. The following summer, soap-tickets — that were exchanged every Saturday for a tin cup filled with soft soap — were given out to every man, woman, and child dirty enough to require them. At present the society is engaged in doing something for the amelioration of the Esquimaux, providing them with silver forks and napkin-rings.

My friend Gregory says that the Esquimaux business will not result in any good, for that the race can never be taught the decencies of life, let alone its refinements. The distribution of soap-tickets, he thinks, was the best thing the gossipers ever engaged in, and if they had not insulted him he would have given them five hundred dollars to have kept the affair going; "but, three thousand comets fly away with them!" he said one day to me, "they had the impudence to send me a dozen of their vile tickets, accompanied with the hope that I would make a good use of them, and thereby encourage the society. I returned them with my compliments, and told them to distribute the same among themselves. I thought until lately," he continued, "that it was to Miss Kate I was indebted for this mark of attention; but I now believe that Lilly White, from New York, who is visiting the Barkers, was at the bottom of the affair, because she looks at me so impertinently whenever we meet, through her miniature eye-glass, as if, for all the world, she was hunting for grease-spots or tobacco-stains on me. Fifty-five thousand katydids trample her to death!" and Gregory Grumm polished away at the bald spot on his head, with his red handkerchief, till it looked like an orange.

The "Quackery" went out to tea a few afternoons since. The "tea-fight," as Gregory terms it, came off at Allen-Dale, under the especial patronage of cousin Kate, who, taking advantage of my absence from home on a fishing excursion, invited the members to meet her over a sociable cup of young hyson. According to Kate's account of the same, it was a delightful affair, and exceedingly agreeable to those engaged in it. Nancy, cousin Kate's little black girl, told Fred that she had a "piping time," and that she "'joyed the 'streme felicity of trying on lots of beautiful hats all covered with red and blue flowers, and lace; and eight or nine black bonnets, besides old *Miss* Axsey's calash; and that green thing," said Nancy, waving her head from side to side, "just suited me the very best of all."

The library, which heretofore has been considered rather as *tabooed* ground to the members of the Golden-Rule Society, became on this occasion the scene of their festivity. The tea-table was set within its sacred precincts. This was a strange innovation on cousin Kate's part, and one of which I in no way approve. It doubtless was a source of very great pleasure — this taking tea in the library — to the assembly, and gave a sort of literary air to the entertainment, which it would not otherwise have possessed. I dare say every woman present considered herself a "blue-stocking" for the time being, and even put on a literary look when she returned home. But the next time I go on a fishing excursion I shall carry with me the key of that apartment. Not a book, of the whole two thousand volumes, could I find, on my return, in its proper place. Several manuscript sheets of an address, to be delivered by me next January before the Antiquarian Association, were missing; two separate poems, half finished, were gone; and some memoranda of very important matters pertaining to the Historical Society had also disappeared. A sermon that I had lately written for our

rector, to be given him some day when I might desire his company to go with me a-trouting, and he should refuse under the plea of having a discourse to write, was carried off by old Mrs. Axsey, who, however, returned it to me to-day, with the remark that it was amazing like some sermons her dear minister preached, and she should n't wonder a bit if he had written it. I suggested that possibly the style was similar. "Oh, yes," she said, "the style is very precisely similar and likewise the fashion."

Fred — who, by the by, is getting to be a good deal of a dandy, and has lately taken to wearing tight boots — possesses a pair of patent-leathers, with red morocco tops, which show plainly beneath the bottom of his pantaloons, and cause Kate's old lady friends, who are somewhat dim-sighted, to ask him if he be troubled with rheumatism that he wears red flannel around his ankles. This, of course, annoys our young gentleman exceedingly, though he retains his good-humor wonderfully well under the provocation.

To-day, during Mrs. Axsey's call, Fred — who, at her especial request, had shown the tops of his boots, which were duly admired by the old lady, who put on her spectacles to obtain a better view of them — was asked by her if he "ever expected to be a Frenchifer, and wear milingtary rappings."

He replied that he guessed not, but he had an old wrapper up-stairs, which he sometimes wore when sick.

"She did n't mean none of them things," she said; "but red stripes down the trousers, and feathers and war."

Thereupon Fred thought that very likely he should, one of these days.

On hearing which, the old lady wrung her hands and said, "that sogers was dreadful, but battles, and widders, and orfins was dreadfuller."

Fred's spirit being up by this time, he proceeded to give the old lady a brief sketch of his future life. He was

going, he told her, in the course of a few years, to West Point, to become a soldier; and that afterwards he should go to battle and get wounded, and have a cork-leg, and a pension, and be called Colonel; and at last, live in a little cottage, all alone by himself, close on the river's bank, where he would keep a sail-boat, and go a-fishing every day, and catch eels and cat-fish.

The worthy matron was quite horrified, and said she had always told her "darters" that Fred would make a perfect Juan Blue-Beard, and now she knew it. She was afraid he 'd be a tremendous fellow.

I relieved Mrs. Axsey greatly by saying that Fred was a good deal of a braggart, and promised more than he performed.

She thought that was bad enough, and reckoned she would tell the minister about it, and have him talk serious-like with the boy.

Before she took her departure, Fred told her that he was an artist now, and painted pictures, and showed her a portrait of Nancy, the black girl, which he had just completed.

She looked at it critically, and then said that it was a first-rate likeness, especially the color, and the curly hair, and the gold beads around her neck; and that one of these days she guessed she 'd let him take hers.

Fred promised to do it, and said he would paint her in a blue dress, and with green ribbons on her cap; which very much delighted the old lady, so that she went away very happy, and promising to call again.

While I was absent on my fishing excursion, up in the Adirondacks, Gregory Grumm — who had refused to accompany me, under the plea that he never cared to leave home, and, besides, he wished to stay and see about his peach-crop — took a trip to Newport. It was full twenty years since Gregory had last visited that celebrated watering-place. Everything about it had changed in the interim.

The hotels had changed; the class of visitors had changed; and it appeared to him even that the ocean itself had changed, and neither rolled its billows as high, nor broke with as loud a crash on the beach as formerly. Gregory thought, too, that possibly he had himself changed, — that he was no longer the buck of yore, but had become one of the solid men of the country. He had a good deal to say about the company there assembled. The young ladies he designated as flirts, the young men, dandies, and the old ladies, dowagers. Such dreadful dissipation and frightful flirtations as he witnessed were truly appalling, though, according to his own account, he appears to have kept pace with the liveliest individual there, and smoked sailed, fished, bathed, bowled, danced, and flirted. At Kate's request he did up in rhyme an account, which I give below, of his sojourn

AT NEWPORT.

I visited Newport, I danced at its balls,
I smoked in its bar-rooms and lounged through its halls;
I bathed in the ocean, and drove on the beach
With Mary and Fanny, and flirted with each.
I bowled in the alleys until I was lame,
My hands full of blisters, my heart in a flame;
And though I played better than eight out of nine,
Yet lost I my wager — a bottle of wine.

I went to the ball-room and danced with Miss Gay,
I polked and I lancered the night-time away;
We ate a light supper, by way of a lunch, —
Some lobster, broiled chickens, ice-cream, cake, and punch, —
Then, grown confidential, we slipped out of sight,
And behind a silk curtain looked out on the night;
There we talked about cables and oysters and pearls,
Till I wondered what cable drew me to the girls.

I walked the piazzas till late in the night,
And quoted the poets to fair Lilly White,
From Bryant the noble, and Halleck the grand,
From fun-loving Saxe, and Holmes genial and bland;

From Morris and Willis sweet verses I pressed,
Then asked of my charmer which loved she the best.
But Lilly, who lives up in Madison Square,
Said her favorite poet wrote "Nothing to Wear."

I sailed in a yacht with the daring Miss Dash;
Her governor dying left plenty of cash,
Which she is investing in bonnets and lace,
And, 'twixt us, she needs them to set off her face.
She drank with the skipper until he got blue,
Then seized on the tiller, and seaward we flew,
With the wind on our lee, and studding-sails set;
"By Neptune!" she shouted, "I guess we 'll get wet."

I hastened from Newport with grief at my heart;
I sought there for Nature, but found only Art;
Yet the ladies, though artful and dealing in paint,
At sight of an artist seemed ready to faint.
But flattered young Slimlegs, who drives a fast mare,
Has plenty of money and plenty of hair;
While the only man there who had brains in his head,
They as fully ignored him as if he were dead.

Then I said to myself, while I sat in my room,
Smoking, in dressing-gown, slippers, and gloom,
"That fashions and follies of life might be found
At Newport, or elsewhere, if there they abound."
Which struck me as being as good in its way
As anything ever Jack Bunsby could say.
And by way of a clincher I added, "Through life
To Newport I 'll go for a flirt, not a wife."

V.

KATE AND I AT BREAKFAST. — WHAT SENT GREGORY TO NEWPORT. — LILLY WHITE; HER FIRST VISIT. — THE GOLDEN RULE. — THE BARKERS. — A MYSTERIOUS ADVERTISEMENT. — GREGORY GOES TO NEW YORK. — POMPEY. — GREGORY'S NOTE. — KING SOLOMON. — FRED'S LETTER.

"KATE," I said, one morning at the breakfast-table, to my cousin, who occupied her usual place opposite me, "I have been wondering what it was that induced our friend Gregory Grumm to visit Newport. At the time I left him, to go to the Adirondacks, I am positive that he had no intention of visiting Newport. Something — and that, too, of great moment — must have occurred to make him desert 'The Hemlocks,' and travel off in the way he did. You may depend upon it, Gregory had some object in going to Newport; he never does anything without a purpose, but what it was I cannot imagine. Can you?'

Kate said that she thought she could unravel the mystery. "You have heard of Lilly White?" she continued.

"Yes," I replied; "I met her some time since at the Barkers', where I called with Gregory, who had business with Barker himself. A pretty girl, magnificent in hoops and flounces, but, it seemed to me, possessing no great amount of intellect. But what has she to do with Gregory's going to Newport?"

"A great deal, I imagine," she answered. "But before I further explain, let me ask if you have noticed the in-

creased care your friend has of late taken with his attire; how much 'sprucer' — to use an effective word — he is than he was formerly?"

"Indeed I have," I answered, "and have drawn therefrom certain conclusions, which may or may not be correct. You know I spoke to you concerning this improvement, full a year ago, about the time I informed him of the amount of your fortune."

"Well, never mind about my fortune now, Paul," replied Kate, somewhat disconcerted, I thought, by the remark; "though, as your memory is so good, perhaps you may remember also that a year ago Miss Lilly White paid her first visit to us dwellers down in the valley."

I nodded affirmatively.

"You are aware, too, that she was here when you departed on your fishing excursion?"

I nodded again.

"But you do not know that from here she went to Newport; and that on the day following her departure, Mr. Grumm also went to Newport; and that from there he accompanied her to New York; and that he has, since his return home, written to and received from her a letter."

Of course I did not know any of these matters, nor did I believe them; and I told Kate it was nonsense, and that I knew Gregory well enough to declare he would not be such a fool as to make love to Lilly White.

"But he is such a fool," said Kate; and I thought she spoke the same with considerable feeling.

"How, Kate," I asked, "did you, who seldom indulge in uttering aught so nearly approaching to gossip, discover all this?"

"Why," and Kate blushed, "it was talked about at the sewing society last evening. Miss Smythe, the postmaster's sister, who often assists in making up and distributing the mails, saw the letters alluded to — at least their envelopes; so that you must allow that my information on that point is

correct. Then, too, the Barkers themselves openly refer to the fact of his visiting their house every day during Miss White's stay there. And even now he goes there three times a week, to talk with Jane Barker about Miss Lilly. There, also, are those verses, relating to Newport, in which he introduces the name of Lilly White, which mention, though certainly not flattering to her, was made simply to blind me, as well as others to whom I might show the verses, (probably he thought I would read them aloud before the 'Golden Rule,') to the fact that he is smitten with her. Ah! I can see that he is a planner."

"Well, really," I remarked, as Kate concluded, "it seems to me as if there were something in all this besides foolish gossip. I must have a talk with Gregory about it, and if he is in love with Lilly White, why, I will argue him out of it."

On looking over the morning paper from New York, that arrived shortly after breakfast, my eyes fell on the following advertisement, which immediately arrested my attention: —

"PERSONAL.

"If the gentleman — the initials of whose name are G. G. — who corresponded while at Newport, in relation to a young lady, with C. O'C., will send to the latter his present address, he will learn *all* of which he heretofore has been desirous but unable to ascertain."

That this referred to my friend Gregory, and, probably, to Lilly White, I had no doubt, but it served only to excite my curiosity without in the least satisfying it. Can it be possible, I thought, that Gregory has been making inquiries of some one in New York, regarding Lilly White and her fortune. Such a thing seemed utterly improbable, and yet, under the circumstances, I could not come to any other conclusion. Just before noon I ordered Fred's pony to the door, and drove over to "The Hemlocks," to see my old friend.

To my surprise, I found Pompey, Gregory's only servant, alone on the premises. His master, so he informed me, had left for New York in the eleven-o'clock train, saying it was uncertain on what day he might return. Pompey believed that "Massa Grumm" had left a note for me on his desk, which he departed to get. While he was gone, I took up a copy of the newspaper in which I had read the advertisement, and my eyes naturally turned to the column wherein it had appeared. The advertisement, however, had been cut from the sheet, and doubtless was in Gregory's wallet.

I trusted that the note would so far explain the matter as to relieve me of my suspicions; but it was most unsatisfactory, and ran thus: —

"*The Hemlocks, Monday, A. M.*

"DEAR PAUL, — Business of importance takes me unexpectedly to the city. If I should not return by Saturday afternoon, I will drop you a line; but you know my aversion to letter-writing; so that, after all, you need not be alarmed if you do not hear from me under a fortnight. Present my kind regards to Fred when you write to him, and believe me,

"Yours, hastily, G. G."

In place of Fred's name, Kate's had at first been written, but was erased, and the other substituted.

I questioned Pompey as to his knowledge of the affair but he could only tell me that his master, while at break fast, reading the paper, had spilt his coffee, upset his chair, and, rising suddenly from the table, went up to his chamber, where he had Pompey pack his carpet-bag, and then, after dressing himself in a new suit he brought from the city, made the servant drive him to the cars. "He appeared to be a good deal excited," continued Pompey, "and asked me, as we rode along, what I would do if I had a mistress,

and if I had ever read what Solomon wrote about the lilies of the valley." And Pompey laughed and winked his eye at me, as much as to say that he knew a good deal of something, but was bound to keep dark.

So I returned to Allen-Dale, as unsatisfied with all that related to Gregory as though I had not stirred from the house. Time will, doubtless, clear up the mystery.

Fred returned to school after passing two weeks at home, during which time the young scapegrace enjoyed himself very much, — played all manner of tricks on Gregory; teased cousin Kate till she lost all patience with him; and frightened Nancy, the little black girl, half to death, by personating, with a mask and sheet, a ghost. Since he reached school, I have received from him the following letter: —

"*Prospect Hill School, August 1st*, 1857.

"DEAR FATHER, — I got here just in time to see old Ferule whip Georgy Groat for robbing Squire Justy's muskmelon patch. He did it in the night-time, and got ten of them, besides four pumpkins, which he thought were watermelons. He got up when all the boys was in bed, and took his pillow-case from the pillow, and went downstairs, and out-doors, and climbed the fence, and got 'em in it. He put them under his bed, and did n't let the other boys know it; but Charley Berry he smelt 'em, and told the rest of the fellows, and they got 'em and ate 'em. Georgy Groat cried about it, and so old Ferule found it out. When I saw him whip Georgy, it made me real homesick, for I did n't know but my turn would come next. Can't I come home again soon? I 'm afraid my pony will not be taken good care of unless I am there. Mr. Penfield has got his new wife here, and John Growsy says she 's a 'regular ginger-top,' though what that is I don't know; but she has curls and a beautiful green-and-red-striped silk dress. Give my love to Uncle Gregory and Cousin Kate,

and don't forget to send me a dollar every week, as you promised.

"Your faithful son, FRED.

"P. S. — Tell Nancy I 'm going to bring her, when I come home again, autographs of all the boys and teachers in the school. F."

VI.

KATE ON LOVERS. — A LETTER. — A MILLINER'S BILL. — A NEW HAT. — AT CHURCH. — THE SERMON; ITS APPLICABILITY. — TURNING THE TABLES. — HAIR-DYE AND WIGS. — DISCRETION. — CHANGING THE SUBJECT. "DOWN IN THE VALLEY."

MORE than a week has gone by since Gregory's departure from "The Hemlocks," and as yet I have heard not a word concerning him.

"It is very strange," I said to Kate, one evening, as we sat together on the piazza, "that Gregory should have gone away in the manner he did, without so much as telling me a word of the matter about which he went."

"It is very strange," replied Kate; "but, nevertheless, I have noticed that when men of your friend Gregory's age become lovers, they are apt to commit every sort of extravagance."

"Yes," I answered, "if they be bachelors."

"Widowers are no wiser," said Kate, "and are as prone to conduct themselves like boys of fifteen as though they had never been married."

This, however, I stoutly denied, and asked Kate if she had ever seen me behave in such an unseemly manner.

Kate thought she had, and was proceeding to state the when and where she had thus seen me, when I told her that I would waive the further discussion of the subject; and then, as the dew was beginning to fall, we entered the house.

Shortly after Gregory's departure Kate received a letter from New York, the superscription of which so nearly re-

sembled Gregory's handwriting, I could have affirmed in a court of justice that he had written it. Even Kate, I know thought it came from Gregory; for, when I handed it to her, she blushed and broke the seal, I thought, with trembling fingers: but when a milliner's bill dropped out, while she was opening it, her self-possession returned, and I immediately turned, disappointed, away, without asking a single question; for I was well assured that no milliner's account would ever find a place in any of Gregory's epistles.

I deemed it a little singular, however, that, from the day this letter reached Kate, she — who, ever since Gregory's departure, had appeared to me to be slightly inclined to melancholy — should directly have recovered her usual cheerfulness. Whether a new hat, in which she made her appearance at church on the following Sunday, had aught to do with her recovery, I cannot positively assert; but I shrewdly imagine it had.

Cousin Kate and I have dwelt together, down in the valley, for many years, very happily, and this was the first occurrence wherein I had noticed any signs of vanity in her; but it was very evident to me that Kate was wonderfully pleased with her new hat, and was desirous of displaying it to the best advantage.

Fortunately for Kate, Sunday was a most auspicious day for her "coming out." Everything was in her favor. The weather was charming, and therefore not only all of the congregation were present, but also many strangers. The morning's sermon, too, seemed particularly adapted to call the attention of the assembly to Kate's hat, although she — with that inimitable power which woman possesses of hiding her feelings — appeared totally unaware of its appositeness. The worthy clergyman took for his text these words, — "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity." Among other truths that he spoke, he said that "vanity was innate in the female breast, and though it

might lie dormant therein for years, still it never fully died out. The germ was forever there; and when one was the least prepared for its exhibition, it was suddenly shown in some piece of finery — perhaps in a gay ribbon, an elegant hat, a feather, a bit of lace, a costly brocade, or the daintiest of gaiters. Again, it might be seen in a rounded arm, a careless curl, a jewelled hand, or a tapering ankle."

More, to the same effect, said our worthy clergyman; but Kate sat through it unmoved, bowing her stately head, surmounted by the new hat, approvingly to all the good man uttered.

As we walked home, I asked Kate if she were pleased with the sermon. She answered that she was; and looking slyly at me, "Poor fellow!" she exclaimed, "how sorry I felt for you when the rector alluded to hair-dye and wigs, while speaking of man's vanity."

Kate certainly is a very wonderful woman, but how she discovered that I wear a wig, and dye my whiskers, I cannot imagine. I have taken much care to keep these two matters secret, for the reason, simply, that I did not wish to have ascribed to vanity that attention to my appearance which, in fact, only arose from a laudable desire on my part to make a decent appearance in society. Of course I did not continue a conversation which had taken so unfortunate a turn, nor say aught to Kate concerning her new hat, which, at first, had been my intention. Discretion, as some one before me, I believe, has wisely remarked, is the better part of valor. Therefore it was that I held my peace, and in silence accompanied my cousin Kate back to Allen-Dale.

For some time past, Kate has been desirous for me to write what she terms a poetical description of Allen-Dale. Secretly, therefore, and at different seasons, I have endeavored to comply with her wishes. On this identical Sunday — being anxious to please Kate, and perhaps with a view of having her forget, and say nothing more to me

concerning the subject of her above remarks; for, to confess the truth, I am not altogether pleased with the idea that age is laying visible hands upon me — I finished, and handed to her during the afternoon, the lines below, entitled —

DOWN IN THE VALLEY.

Down in the valley, where the lilies blow,
Where violets bloom and china-asters grow;
Where glide clear waters o'er a pebbly bed,
Marked in their course by sumach-berries red;
Where rabbits burrow, and where foxes hide,
And squirrels, chattering, leap on every side;
Where graceful elms and glistening birches rise, —
There Allen-Dale contents the passers' eyes.

A gabled mansion built of undressed stone,
Just as 't was quarried, of a sober tone,
Though few of those who pass it every day
Know that its color is a modest gray;
For, wrapped from base to roof in clamb'ring vines,
Ivies and woodbines, and sweet eglantines,
So little of the lodge itself is seen,
That slight observers oft pronounce it green.

Above its roof a dozen chimneys rise,
From which the smoke curls upwards to the skies;
An ancient weathercock, grown black with years,
Upon its highest gable's point appears;
Of cunning workmanship and quaint device,
An Ethiopian on a cake of ice.
So Gregory says; but Cousin Kate declares
It is a poet singing Lydian airs.

Whiche'er it be, it constant is and true;
Summer and winter, spring and autumn too,
Unmoved it stands and points, from May to May,
To where "the course of empire takes its way."
The wind may bluster, and around it rage;
North, south, and east a vigorous war may wage;
But it defies them all and though *they* change,
Its face from western skies does never range.

Within the house is many a pleasant room,
Which holds the sunlight and keeps out the gloom,
Where easy-chairs and lounges soft and wide
Are placed for lazy folks on every side;
And here and there are cosy little nooks,
Where one can linger over work or books,
Near windows diamond-paned and stained with care
In colors that subdue the noonday's glare.

A broad, deep fireplace within the hall,
With ruddy blaze — from early in the fall,
All through the winter — gives its light and heat,
To please the sight and warm the slippered feet.
Here in the morning first, and last at night,
The household gathers in each other's sight,
To hear the Bible read and join the prayer
That asketh God to keep them in His care.

Here too the morning meal is duly spread,
And, with our coffee, are the papers read
Then to our several duties we depart,
Each with a willing mind and cheerful heart;
And when the day, with all its work, is done,
And sinks beyond the hills the setting sun,
Once more we meet, and by the blazing light
We talk or read aloud, then say — good-night.

VII.

NEWS FROM GREGORY. — KATE IN LOVE. — GREGORY'S DANGER; HIS LETTER.—AT THE "ASTOR."—CITY-HALL CLOCK. — CHATHAM STREET. — UP-STAIRS. — STRIPED PANTS. — LILLY WHITE; HER FORTUNE. — A HAPPY FAMILY. — BRIEF CANDLES. — MY REMARKS. — MY LETTER.

N the morning's mail, a few days since, a letter from Gregory Grumm came safely to hand. I was very glad to hear from Gregory. He had been absent from home over two weeks, and, so far as I was aware, not a syllable had been received by any one dwelling down in the valley concerning him. I had not thought that my old friend could have left me so long in suspense regarding his movements as he did. He would have been terribly "put out" with me if I had done the like. If I had made arrangements for marrying without first consulting him, he would never have forgiven me; but he, it seems, could do all this without mentioning the subject to either Kate or myself. Kate, brave woman that she is! endeavors to look at the matter in a cheerful light, and laughs and jokes about it, though I really think her heart is breaking. For, strange as it may appear, Kate, as I have every reason to believe, loves Gregory. At least, she did love him before this abominable letter was received; but if he is to be married, why, she will not, nor shall not, love him any more. If Kate says so, I will bring a suit against him, as her next friend, for breach of promise; or, if it please her better, I 'll even challenge my old friend to fight a duel, or else he must make an apology. Kate shall not be treated in this way with impunity. But to Gregory's letter: —

"*New York, Aug.* 18, 1857.
Astor House, Room No. 502.

"DEAR PAUL, — Here am I, perched half-way between heaven and earth, in a cage six by nine, or thereabouts, having a circular loophole, through which, by standing tip-toe upon my carpet-bag, I can see the City-Hall clock, and make out the exact time, any hour of the day or night, by the aid of my eye-glass: this, if I carried with me no watch, would of course be a source of great convenience. After one gets up here it is all very well, barring, as the Irishmen say, the mosquitoes; and that reminds me that the bars of the mosquito-net, which I purchased yesterday in Chatham Street of an Israelite, are so wide apart that the 'bloody divils' play at fox-and-goose through them; and, so far as regards any protection it affords me from their attacks, why, I might as well cover myself with a fig-leaf. After one gets up here, I said, it's very well; but the getting up plays the deuce with a man of my superfluity of flesh, — it puts me to my trumps, I assure you. I have a white-jacketed rascal to precede me, whenever I make the ascent, with a tray full of sherry-cobblers and other cooling drinks, and I take one or more of them, as my inclination prompts, at every landing. Fifty thousand glasses of soda-water and hock, however, would not suffice to keep down the perspiration. What makes the ascent more tedious to me, is the fact that, having been obliged, for good reasons, to discard my favorite nankeens, I foolishly purchased, of some one who called himself a very fashionable tailor, no less than five pair of striped pantaloons, and each pair, bad luck to them! fits me tighter than a drum-head, which makes climbing up-stairs in them something awful. What in the name of seventeen zebras induced me to buy so many striped pantaloons, I cannot imagine. It must have been after dinner that I did it. I shall give them all to Pompey on my return home. This naturally brings me to the subject

of my leaving home; and you, doubtless, are anxious to know what brought me here. Now that, Paul, is the very question I've asked myself every day since I have been absent, and I am almost inclined to think that I came here on an *ignis fatuus* expedition. To tell the truth, I am as far from a clear understanding of the case as you are yourself. I have written to her about it, but she is either out of town, or else the penny-post is most miserably conducted. I think the latter is the case, and wish the manager of it had fifty thousand *billet-doux* stuffed into his pantaloons' pockets. I came here to answer an advertisement. You know Lilly White? well, she is at the bottom of the mischief, though how it will end Solomon himself would not be able to tell. It seems frightful, Paul, frightful for a man of my age to be obliged to live in the way I do, having to ascend night after night so many flights of stairs, and to dwell in such a state of anxiety and perplexity, and all on that young flirt's account. Speaking of her account, I find that she has forty thousand dollars invested in confounded Hudson River Railroad stock, and as much more in Erie; but when I get her matters into my own hands, I 'll make a change, I tell you. Of course, you know by this time, Paul, that I have come to regard matrimony from your point of view, and to believe that it is filled with all manner of pleasant felicities, and that its infelicities are few and far between; that, in short, I intend to be married; and that you may interpose no objections to it, I will promise you to desert the Hemlocks — sell it, my dear boy, out and out, and, taking my bed and baggage, go over to Allen-Dale and live henceforth with you. Five hundred wedding-rings, Paul, what jolly times we will have! What a happy family we shall be! I have the vanity to believe that Kate will be far more contented with life when she possesses a companion than she has ever yet been; while you, my old friend, I know, will be delighted with my society. Twenty-five imps of darkness take the short pieces of candles one gets at

hotels! Mine is just flickering in the socket; so leaving unwritten much that I had intended to write, I must, perforce, bid you good-night.

"Yours, in the dark,

GREGORY GRUMM."

"Gregory may have been in the dark," I said to Kate, when I had finished reading this remarkable epistle, "but he has, at least, fully enlightened me as to his proceedings." Kate blushed. "The coolness," I continued, "with which he proposes to remove to Allen-Dale with his Lilly White wife is, I think, the most remarkable feature of the letter." Kate stared at me. "And the reason he gives, too," I went on, "is delicious. He thinks, forsooth, that you need a companion, and that you will be more contented with life if Lilly White, or rather Lilly Grumm, be that companion." Here Kate lost all command of her feelings, and laughed immoderately. "My cousin Kate," I said, soothingly, taking her hand; but before I could say more she withdrew it, and went hastily from the room. "It is very evident to me," I thought, after Kate's exit, "that she is unable to control her feelings. In her present state it would never do for Gregory to bring hither his wife. I will write to him immediately, advising him to remain abroad for a while." Therefore I sat down before my desk, and wrote as follows: —

"*Allen-Dale, August 19th*, 1857.

"DEAR OLD BOY, — I have just received yours of yesterday, and I confess that its contents quite startled me. I had no idea that you thought of marriage, at least not with the person of whom you speak. As regards your removing to Allen-Dale, I cannot say that, at present, I look on it in a favorable light. When time shall have assuaged the feelings which exist in a *certain quarter*, it may then be considered upon; but for the present, if you have any regard

for me or Kate, I must seriously ask you to remain away. What think you, old fellow, of a bridal trip to Europe? I understand that these kind of things are, nowadays, all the go with newly married couples. Let me hear from you again before the affair comes to a point, and believe me, ever, through weal or woe,

"Yours, most sincerely,

"PAUL."

VIII.

MRS. AXSEY.— GENEALOGICAL.— A SIGN.— HER PORTRAIT. A HINT FOR GREGORY. — HER DECEASED "PARDNERS." SIMON JONES. — MISTER CLOVER. — OLD AXSEY. — BALLOON. — NUMBER FOUR. — GINGERBREAD. — A MYSTERIOUS LADY. — A BABY. — LILLY WHITE.

OLD Mrs. Axsey lately passed the day with Kate. She came in the morning before breakfast, and remained till after sunset. She brought with her a large basket of stockings that required darning, and busied herself through the day with repairing them. She declared, while at the breakfast-table, that she had come to Allen-Dale "to experience a season of rejoicing, and," she continued, glancing at her well-filled plate, "I believe I am experiencing it."

Mrs. Axsey is a notable character down in the valley, and a very important personage in the eyes of many of its ladies. She is generally the first one to welcome little strangers to town, and is proud of being able to tell the exact number of pounds which each child, native of the valley, for twenty years past, weighed at a very early period of its existence. Mrs. Axsey is the widow of three husbands. Gregory Grumm terms her a "three-ply widow dyed in the wool." After the death of her third "pardner," being left in destitute circumstances, with a large family of daughters to support, she entered into the mantua-making business. The better to notify the public of her occupation, she ordered a sign to be painted, and wrote the lettering for the same on a slip of paper, which she sent by one of her "darters" to the painter, with strict in-

junctions for him on no account to depart from the copy. The man of signs, who was a bit of a wag, and loved a joke, followed the orthography with exactness, so that the sign, when completed, read, in gilt letters, much to the surprise and amusement of passers-by, —

MRS. AXSEY,
MANTORMENTOR.

Some persons — Gregory among the number — were even wicked enough to say that the sign told the entire truth, as the ghosts of the "dear departed," if interrogated, would testify. Mrs. Axsey's mode of spelling "mantua-maker" was certainly not in accordance with Webster's Unabridged.

The old lady inquired particularly concerning Fred, and said she was sorry that he had returned to school, as she wanted him to paint her "picter," as he had promised. Would he come home, she asked, and do it if she sent him word that she was all ready? She guessed that she 'd be "taken off" with her hair in curls, and without cap or spectacles. It looked so "antykated" to wear them; and though she was a lady of the old school, yet she did like, sometimes, to be a little fashionable; and when a body has a "likeness taken off," she thought it a good time to try and be somebody; and for one, she 'd like for her "posteriors" to see just what she was. Kate suggested that the word posterity was more appropriate than the one she had chosen. Well, she said, it might be, for she was no great hand at grammar herself, but her youngest "darter" was amazing 'cute at it. Folks laughed at her mistakes a good deal sometimes, she continued; but, for her part, she guessed she knew more about some things than one half the people did who had so much "book-larning."

Mrs. Axsey had much to say about Gregory, and asked many questions concerning him. She 'd heard tell that he

was going to be married to a little white girl down to York, but she rather thought he could do better closer to home, and take a wife nearer his size.

"Age, you mean," I said.

Yes, it was age; but she liked right well to see a man and woman that was married just about the same size. "Though, to be sure," she continued, "in my own case I found it purty hard to bring it about just right, for my first pardner — Simon Jones was his name — he's Katy's, and Jerusha's, and two or three of the other girls' father — I disremember now exactly which ones of them, but it's all down straight in the 'log-book,' as he used to call the Bible, for he had been one v'y'ge to sea, but his legs were in the way so much he never went again; he, I say, was an oncommon tall man; while Mister Clover, my Number Two, was just as much again too short; and you both know what poor Axsey was, so fat and solidary, that it has been a great wonder to me, ever since his death, that the appoplecticks did n't carry him off five years sooner than it otherwise did."

"Oh, yes," I replied, "I remember him very well. The frequenters of the 'Hammer and Tongs' prevailed on him to attempt a balloon ascension, in company with the celebrated aëronaut, Mr. Silly, one fourth of July; but, much to the disappointment of the populace, it was found, when the cords were cut, that, owing to his great weight, the balloon could not ascend: so he was obliged to get out of the car, and Mr. Silly immediately went up alone."

"That's so," exclaimed the old lady, wiping her eyes "and though it was a great disappointment to him, for he was of a disploring exposition, yet for my part I allers felt mighty kind o' thankful like that the balloon gin out as it did, for that Silly, when he came to settle down arter an hour or two, went kersplash right into the middle of Big Pond, and if he had n't a been a swimmer, why he 'd 'a' drowned. Now my old man could n't swim more than a

baby, and he 'd just as certainly, if he 'd been in that balloon, met with a watery grave as anything. I've allers felt gratified with Providence that nary one of my pardners was ever born to be drowned."

"I trust none of them, Mrs. Axsey, met with a worse fate."

"No, sir," she replied, "they all died to home, inside their beds, like Christian persons. But that 's got nothing to do with Mr. Grumm and his wife. Now if I was that man, I know who I 'd take for my spouse. I would n't go pottering around York city, but just stop to home and marry about the best woman by long odds that there is in the world; and that, too, without going more 'n a mile away from the Hemlocks."

"You doubtless mean yourself, Mrs. Axsey," I remarked.

"No, I don't mean myself either, though I should n't mind," and the old lady simpered, "taking a Number Four, purvided he had plenty of money, like Mr. Grumm and" —

"Who?" I asked, observing she paused.

"You," she quickly replied.

Thereupon I incontinently left the room, for I really feared that, in the excitement under which she appeared to be laboring, she might actually offer herself to me.

I heard no more from Mrs. Axsey during the day, though Kate informed me that, when she was not engaged with her basket of stockings, she was occupied in making and baking a large quantity of gingerbread to take home with her; because, as she said, she liked to have some such thing in the house to give the children, who each Saturday came to see her.

After tea, which she and Kate took together alone in the housekeeping-room, she came into the library where I was, and regaled me with a long story concerning a lady, — a stranger attired in mourning, who, one June morning, nearly twenty years ago, suddenly made her appearance down in the valley, and rented a little cottage, where in the

autumn she gave birth to a daughter; and that as soon as she was able to travel, a carriage, the like of which had never before been seen down in the valley, stopped at the cottage for her, and she, her babe, and an elderly woman, who had acted as the lady's housekeeper, getting into it, were driven away; and no one down in the valley ever knew where she came from or whither she went. Mrs. Axsey had been the stranger's nurse, and said the babe was the prettiest she had ever seen, and possessed soft blue eyes and golden hair; and that on the child's right shoulder there appeared, distinctly traced, a cross, about an inch in length, of a purple color; and that, for her part, she had always thought the lady was a nun from some convent, and perhaps the wife of a bishop, though the lady herself said her name was Whyte, but Mrs. A. had looked through a list, and could not find a single bishop of that name in it, and so she was as much in the dark about her as any one else down in the valley.

After Mrs. Axsey's departure, I sat musing over this somewhat singular story, and wondering what had become of the "blue-eyed, golden-haired babe," who, if now living, was a woman grown, when I was disturbed by Kate, who asked me what subject was engaging my thoughts. I told her. She thought as much, she said; "but do you know, Paul," she continued, "the name which that child now bears?"

"Is she then living?" I asked with surprise, "and do you know her?"

"She is, and I know her," replied Kate. "She and Lilly White are the same."

"And Gregory — do you think he is aware of this circumstance?" I asked.

Kate thought he was; but just then lady callers were announced, and, lost in conjectures, I remained in the library, while Kate went to receive them. Nor has she since given me a single opportunity to renew the subject;

and, as it is evident to me that she seeks to avoid all reference to it, I considerately refrain from recurring to the matter; but I intend writing to Gregory — who, by the by, I have not heard from since his precious epistle of the 18th — regarding it.

IX.

AN ILLUSTRATED LETTER.—FRED'S SUSPENSION.—FINANCIAL AFFAIRS.—CAUSE OF "HARD TIMES."—EXCULPATION OF THE LADIES.—KNIGHT-ERRANTRY.—WEDDING-GARMENTS.—MRS. AXSEY; HER PRIVATE OPINION; HER POEM.—"IN MEMORIAM."—A TABLET.—INSANITY. GOSPEL DOCTRINE.—THE DECEASED AXSEY.—BURNT PIES.

I HAVE had another letter from Fred. It simply contained a rude pen-and-ink sketch representing the young man with empty pockets turned inside out, and a most lugubrious expression of countenance, beset on one side by an old woman, carrying a basket of apples, thrusting at him a bill on which the characters "28 cents" were discernible; while on the other side of Fred was an old man, wooden-legged, and supported by a crutch, tendering another bill, with "Candies, 10 cents," written on it. Under the sketch appeared the words, "Hard times at Prospect Hill Academy," and above it, "A panic." The letter contained nothing further, either in the way of illustration or explanation, nor, in fact, did it require any. The picture said all that was necessary. Fred, the humorist, found himself in a tight place. He was beset by duns, and not having the wherewith to pay his debts, he had taken this mode of apprising me of his situation. To relieve the young spendthrift from his embarrassment, by supplying his immediate necessities, and at the same time to leave a small margin in his favor, I immediately sent him thirty-nine cents, in three-cent pieces, and wrote him, at the same time, that financial affairs down in the valley were in a very

bad condition. Had Gregory been home, the lad would have received an eagle, at least, for his happy performance. But for my part I do not approve of allowing boys much spending-money. They are apt to become extravagant. If, when young, a boy spends his dimes too freely, he will, when he grows older, spend his dollars just as improvidently. My attention having been directed to this subject, by Fred's frequent appeals to me for money, has led me to examine somewhat closely into the matter, and thereby I have been induced to prepare a paper which I shall read before the literary society of which I am president, during the coming winter. In it I assume the ground that the present deplorable condition of our country is owing almost entirely to the reckless extravagance of schoolboys; and I therein prove, by proper and reliable statistics, derived from the heads of colleges and schools, that the enormous sum of twenty-six millions of dollars is annually expended by boys and girls under twenty years of age, in the purchase of candies, ice-cream, cakes, tarts, etc., in the Northern and Middle States alone.

This paper, when I come to read it, will doubtless astonish most of my hearers; and yet, I shall not make a single assertion in it, which I cannot prove to the entire satisfaction of those who otherwise would deny the truth of my report. I am determined that our financial troubles shall no longer be ascribed to the extravagance of our ladies. In me they will find an able champion; and they may continue to flounce as deeply, and expand their hoops as widely as they please, without having the cause of the hard times laid at their doors.

Let the ladies thank God, then, that the days of chivalry have not utterly passed away; that there are some Don Quixotes yet left in this money-getting-and-losing world of ours, — some brave knights, who are ready to step forth in behalf of beauty robed in silks and laces, and not only willing, but able, to turn the tide of popular error, setting

against them, into its proper channel, leading to the feet of indiscreet and inexperienced youth.

Old Mrs. Axsey has been passing several days at Allen-Dale, assisting Kate, who, it appears to me, is having an immense quantity of plain sewing done, and also a large amount of finer needlework. A good many unnamable garments, beautifully frilled and edged, have of late been bleaching on the grass or dancing on the clothes-lines. I begin to think that Kate and Gregory are playing me false, and that Lilly White is simply a myth, or, at best, is only used to blind me. If it should turn out that it is Kate whom Gregory is to marry, and not Lilly, I shall consider myself sold; and yet, I cannot account for the important part which Lilly White seems to play in the affair. Who is Lilly White? That is the question.

I must have asked myself this aloud, for Mrs. Axsey immediately opened the door of the room wherein I was, and replied, saying that she was the rich young lady who visited the Barkers, and that everybody said Mr. Grumm was going to marry her, but that for her part she did n't believe it, because she had seen something in this house that made her think contrarywise.

"Why, what do you mean, Mrs. Axsey?" I asked.

"Oh, never you mind, sir," she replied. "I can keep a secret, and be as mum as anybody, but when you see such kinds of work going on in the way of making things, as I diskiver in this 'ere house, why, I have my own private opinion about it, and that opinion I don't tell nobody."

"Indeed, Mrs. Axsey, you may be right."

"To be sure I am. I hain't forgot yet how I fixed up myself every time when I was getting ready to be married; and, as I tried it myself three times, I guess I 'm able to find out all about such things; and speaking of my departed pardners, makes me remember to tell you that I 've been writing some poetry about them, which I 'm going to have painted on a panel, and then hang it on the wall of

the church, just above my seat there, something like Squire Dick's tabby, you know, what tells about his consort Jerushy, that 's dead."

"A tablet, you mean, I presume?"

"Yes, that 's the thing."

"A very good idea it will be, Mrs. Axsey, and highly commendable in you." — "Besides, pious and humiliating," she added. "And here," she continued, "are the verses, which, after the names of my pardners, I mean to have described on my tabby."

And Mrs. Axsey handed me the following "pome," which I read, after first adding the words —

IN MEMORIAM.

To my three pardners who are dead,
I hang this tablet o'er my head,
That so, whenever it I see,
I shall remember all the three.

At meeting in the morning, I
Will recall him who first did die,
And in the afternoon 't will do
To think of him, my number two.

At evening service I will give
My thoughts to him who last did live,
And then I 'll wipe my weeping eyes,
For I 'll meet them in Paradise.

Now, all you ladies who are wives,
Make your pardners 'sure their lives,
And then whene'er they come to die,
They 'll not leave you as poor as I.

"Was left, I presume you mean, Mrs. Axsey?"

"Yes, certain," she answered, "as poor as I was left. Ain't it plain enough?"

"Oh, yes, the meaning is clear," I replied; "but the phraseology is slightly imperfect."

"Well, law, suz, perhaps it is a little crazy, as you say,

but then the troubles I 've gone through with is enough to make me write crazyology-like."

"To be sure they are, Mrs. Axsey. I should have taken these into consideration before I criticized your production."

"And now do give me," she added, "your candy reasons about them. Ain't they sweet and solemn-like; and don't they go just to the right spot in one's feelings?"

"Certainly, Mrs. A——, and what I particularly admire in them is the admirable piece of advice with which you close. If all wives would compel their husbands to insure their lives in their favor, there would be less need than there is of charitable societies for the relief of indigent females."

"That 's real charitable gospel doctrine, sir," said the old lady, looking much pleased at my agreeing with her so cordially; "and I 'm an indignant female whenever I hear of a poor, good-for-nothing shoat dying, and leaving no property, nor no insurance on his life for his widder to live respectfully on. It 's amazin' to me how mankind can do so. Now there was Axsey, just as good a pardner as ever wore shoes out, and though he did talk about it at one time a good deal, — and, in fact, I thought rather hankered arter it, — yet he jest allowed himself to drop off like a rotten pear at last, without raisin' nary finger to leave me a fortin, as he oughter have done; and there I was, jest as I was when I married him, withouten anything to fall back on, 'ceptin' my darters. So I had to go into the mantormenting business, which all the folks down here in the valley allowed was a burnin' shame; and — good gracious! there 's that oven full of pies I left, 'll all be burnt up."

And, without further words, Mrs. Axsey hastened from the room to see about the pies, which might, possibly, prove a burning shame to her.

X.

CONFIDENTIAL. — GREGORY'S NIECE. — "LILLY WHITE'S MOTHER."—THE REV. JEBEZ GRUMM; HIS CHARACTER; HIS SON GREGORY; HIS DAUGHTER PATIENCE; THEIR EDUCATION. — TREASURES IN THE GARRET. — SUNFLOWERS AND HOLLYHOCKS.—DAVID AND ABSALOM. A BOSTON BLADE. — JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.

DAYLIGHT streams through the darkness. The mystery is unravelled. Kate, in a confidential hour, late one evening, while we were seated before the great fireplace in the hall, watching the pine knots blazing and rolling their black smoke in torrents up the chimney, — and after we had duly discussed the contents of another letter from Gregory, received that afternoon, — revealed to me that it was herself, and not Lilly White, whom he is about to marry.

I cannot say that I was surprised to learn this, for in various ways my eyes had seen such culmination; and, therefore, when Kate made the avowal, I was prepared for it, and neither fainted nor made any exclamations of wonder. I simply congratulated Kate, and said it yielded me pleasure to hear from her own lips that such was the case. "But what," I asked, "has Lilly White to do with it, and why is Gregory spending so much time in New York, solely, as I am led to believe by his letters, on her account? And then, too," I continued, "did he not state in his letters to me that he intended marrying Miss Lilly, and would bring her with him to Allen-Dale, to be a companion for you?"

"Not at all," replied Kate. "His letters, I must allow,

were not as clearly expressed as they might have been on this subject, and thereby you were led to a false conclusion; but that you should do so, was, I am certain, never Gregory's intention: I plead guilty to having seen, from the first, the error into which you had fallen; and though a word from me might have shown to you how very much you were at fault, yet I could not, perhaps I would not, bring myself to explain the truth of the matter. So you and Gregory, neither understanding the other, wrote letters at cross-purposes, while I" —

"While you," I interrupted, "stood by and enjoyed the joke. But Lilly White — what of her?"

"Why, did I not tell you?" asked Kate; "she is Gregory's niece — the child of his only and well-beloved sister, of whom you have often heard him speak and grieve over her untimely death, not knowing either that she had left a daughter; but as the story is not a long one, I will tell it to you."

So I threw another pine knot upon the glowing embers, poured some hot water, from the kettle singing on the hearth, into my glass, containing sundry proper ingredients, and, after stirring it with a spoon and taking a sip of the beverage just brewed, I gave Kate to understand, by quietly nodding my head, that I was ready for her to commence; and thereupon Kate immediately began narrating the following story of

LILLY WHITE'S MOTHER.

"In a certain village in New England, distinguished only for having been the birthplace of one of our Presidents, dwelt, some twenty-five years since, the Reverend Jabez Grumm, — a Presbyterian divine belonging to the old school, who liked better in his sermons to dwell upon the wrath of God, as displayed in passages taken from the Old Testament, than to speak of His loving kindness as shown in the life and death of our Saviour. Harsh, puri-

tanical, and self-righteous, the Reverend Jabez ruled his household with a rod of iron. His wife — a feeble, uncomplaining little body — dwelt with her husband scarce three years before she succumbed to his harshness, and died, broken in heart and spirit, leaving to his protection two children, the elder a boy, (our friend Gregory,) and the younger a girl, named Patience, the mother of Lilly. The two grew up together, entirely secluded from the society of all save their stern father; and it was seldom, even, that they exchanged a word with any one outside the walls of their lonesome dwelling. Only when going to and returning from meeting did they see a kind or cheerful face. During service they were taught to look solely at the minister, and all idle gazing around was denounced by the strict divine as a most heinous sin, — one for which they would be punished not only here on earth, but with fire and brimstone hereafter. Teachers, other than their father, they never had; consequently that knowledge which he held in the highest esteem — namely, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew — they were early taught; while the common English studies were wholly neglected. Patience, futhermore, knew some little of cooking, and, whenever permitted by her father — which, however, was but seldom — found great pleasure and delight in assisting the cook in the kitchen. Gregory, though, poor fellow! was kept closely at the dead languages till he was almost dead himself. One day, however, somewhere near his fifteenth birthday, he chanced to find, thrust away out of sight under the garret-eaves, a box filled with old and musty books, somewhat different from the volumes of sermons and commentaries that adorned the shelves of his father's library; among them were several odd volumes of the 'Spectator,' Percy's 'Ancient Reliques,' a copy of Shakspeare, and, best of all, a well-thumbed edition of 'Robinson Crusoe.' These books, through the long summer afternoons, both he and his sister read, sitting with their backs

against the great chimney, which passed through the centre of the garret. To them it was as if they had discovered a new world. Hitherto they had lived solely among the ancients — had dwelt in tents with the chosen people of God, and had gone forth to do battle with the Greeks and Romans. Their new books put fresh life into their young but drooping hearts, and taught them that there were other nations on the earth than the ones of which they read, and other beings than those who inhabited the dull New-England town where they were passing their unmemorable lives.

"Before Gregory had quite gotten 'Robinson Crusoe' by heart, he resolved to run away from home, and take his chance for obtaining a living somewhere in the wide world, among people who had less knowledge of classical affairs than he. Poor little Patience cried sadly when Gregory announced to her his intention of going away, for she could not bear the idea of remaining alone with her grim papa and the cross black cook. Gregory, too, shed many tears at the thought of parting with his little sister; but he could no longer bear the dead languages, and the long-winded prayers, and the still longer-winded sermons which he was forever hearing. So he promised little Patience that, in a little while, when he had made as much money as the deacons got on Fast-day, when they handed around in the meeting the contribution-boxes, he would return and get her, and they would live together in some great city, where nobody would make them study, and where they would have thanksgiving dinners every day of their lives. Nor would she have to wait for him very long, either — only till fall, he said, when the sunflowers and hollyhocks, down at the bottom of the garden, went to seed, and their dry stalks rattled in the autumn wind.

"'And will you,' asked little Patience, 'buy me a new silk gown and a blue ribbon, and let me make ginger-snaps every Saturday?'

"Young Gregory promised he would; and so, early one morning he kissed her good-bye, while the stars still shone in the sky, and taking his little bundle, containing all his worldly possessions, including Shakspeare and 'Robinson Crusoe,' he left the gloomy old parsonage and his grim father, and little Patience, and his dead mother lying in the churchyard behind him, and set off, with a bold heart but tearful eyes, upon his travels.

"Weeks and months and years rolled by, slowly to some, swiftly to others, but never a soul in that stupid New-England village heard a word concerning Master Gregory, Parson Grumm's boy, who ran away. Not even little Patience witnessed his return as he had promised, though she watched for him when the sunflowers and hollyhocks went to seed, and their stalks rattled in the wind. The old parson caused great search to be made for the runaway, and even made a journey to Boston, astride of his gray mare, himself, in hopes of finding or hearing something concerning the lost son, but all in vain; and so the old man, hiding his grief under an appalling grimness of countenance, returned home, to preach a very affecting sermon about David and Absalom, which caused the old women to wipe their eyes, and made even the stern deacons blow their nose louder and oftener than was their wont.

"Three years went by, and Gregory was almost forgotten, save by his father and little Patience. Every fall, when the sunflowers and hollyhocks went to seed, Patience looked for her truant brother, and on each anniversary of his departure, the Reverend Jabez preached the David and Absalom sermon. And so when five years had gone by, those in the village who had not forgotten him believed him dead, as nothing had, in all that time, been heard of him; but in the sixth year he returned. Then for the first time the good people learned from his own lips the story of his wanderings. When he left home he went direct to

Nantucket, where he shipped for a whaling voyage around Cape Horn; the vessel in which he sailed, after being out two years, was destroyed by fire; he, with six other sailors, managed to reach an uninhabited island, where they led a Robinson Crusoeish sort of life for three years, when they were taken off at last by a vessel which touched there for a supply of water, and then, so soon as he was able, Gregory made his way home; but in the mean time changes had taken place in the dull New-England village.

"His father had, during the fourth year of his absence, been gathered to his fathers, and slept in the churchyard beside his wife. Little Patience, too, had grown up, and on being permitted by her father, a few months before his death, to go out into society, and attend merry-makings, had, at the very first corn-husking she engaged in, fallen in love with a dashing young blade from Boston town, who in turn was equally smitten with her, and before many weeks she eloped with him, on a moonlight evening, and was married by the Universalist minister, whom her father bitterly hated; which, in itself made him more wroth with his daughter than he would otherwise have been, and caused him, doubtless, to forbid her to return home, and induced him to make a will leaving his household gods and his manuscript sermons to the black cook who waited on him and prepared his daily meals. Then he preached a sermon in relation to Jephthah's daughter, whose filial love and obedience he held up in contrast to the act of which his daughter was guilty. This was the old Puritan's last sermon. Whether he had in its composition and delivery over-exerted his mental powers, or whether it arose from grief at his daughter's conduct, was never clearly known; but from that day the silver cord was loosed, the golden bowl was broken, and on the following Sabbath his coffin was carried into the church, and a brother clergyman preached over it his funeral sermon.

"In a worldly point of view, Patience had done well.

Her husband was wealthy, and a rising man in his profession. His fame as a lawyer was spread abroad. More than one year they lived happily together, when he was called upon to try a suit in New York, whither he went, leaving his wife behind him. Soon after his arrival there he was taken sick; his wife was sent for; she started to go to him, and reached here, when she too was taken ill, and, as old Mrs. Axsey once informed you, gave birth to a daughter, who, it appears, was Lilly. So soon as the young mother was able to travel, she proceeded to New York, but reached there too late to find her husband living; he had died the day before her arrival. The shock was greater than her feeble strength could bear, and in a few days she was laid beside her husband.

"Lilly, however, lived and grew, and her affairs prospered in the hands of her guardian, who was her father's bosom friend; and now, at eighteen, she is not only a belle but an heiress. Gregory's attention was attracted to Lilly, first, by seeing a minature which she wore, that resembled his lost sister. Though he was not aware that she had left an infant, yet the more he pondered the subject, the more convinced was he that she was his sister's child. This led him to go to Newport; this caused him to make inquiries of a lawyer in New York; this it was that carried him there, and which is now keeping him from Allen-Dale."

"And from you," I added, as Kate finished her account of Lilly White's mother and Lilly White's Uncle Gregory. Kate, though a woman owning to thirty-five, blushed, and said, "Good-night."

XI.

GREGORY'S RETURN.— WHAT THE GOLDEN RULE SAID.— OUR THANKSGIVING DINNER. — A FAMOUS PIE. — MRS. AXSEY SPEAKS; ITS EFFECT.—GREGORY'S OPINION OF MRS. A. — FRED'S OPINION. — GREGORY'S PLANS. — ENTERTAINING BACHELORS. — BAGDAD. — ARABIAN NIGHTS. — PERFUMES AND OILS.

GREGORY has returned home, accompanied by Miss Lilly White. Their arrival caused great talk down in the valley. Both the old and young canvassed the matter pretty freely. The gentlemen, especially those who had arrived at years of discretion, — say fifty or thereabouts, — termed Gregory an old fool, and Lilly a young simpleton. The grandmotherly part of the other sex asked each other, with uplifted eyes and hands, What have n't we lived to see? While the more youthful portion of the community laughed, and wondered how it would end. The Golden-Rule Society held a special meeting, ostensibly to hear a report from a committee in regard to the primitive habits of the Esquimaux, but in reality to gossip about Gregory and his approaching marriage with Lilly White. Kate, who was present at the meeting, gave a highly interesting account of their proceedings to the parties most interested, who, on the following day, with my own family, were gathered around the Thanksgiving dinner-table. Some of the ladies, she said, at the society, declared most emphatically that Gregory and Lilly were already married; that the ceremony was performed in Grace Church, before a large and fashionable audience, that they had come to spend the honeymoon at "The Hemlocks," and that immediately after

Christmas they were to start for Europe. No one down in the valley, except old Mrs. Axsey, suspects the true state of the case. There will be some inflammatory speeches made by members of the Quackery when they find out, as they will on Christmas-day, that it is Kate, after all, and not Lilly White, who is the coming wife. Those who have spoken slightingly to Kate of Gregory, and ridiculed him, will, I imagine, wish that they had held their peace.

Our Thanksgiving dinner was, I think, a very excellent one. Few persons down in the valley, I imagine, partook of any better. It was prepared by Mrs. Axsey, acting under Kate's direction. One end of the table was adorned by a roasted turkey, the other by a chicken-pie; various vegetables occupied appropriate places on the board, and all ultimately gave place to puddings and pies. I have never partaken, however, of any pie which I so relished as I did the chicken-pie that graced my Thanksgiving board. There is a pie celebrated in history, which, perhaps, was its superior. I refer to the one composed of four-and-twenty blackbirds; but even its superiority consisted not so much in its excellence as a pie, as in the circumstance that after the pie was baked, and when, as one would naturally suppose, the blackbirds were done to death, on its being opened they began to sing. What length of time, however, they continued singing, history fails to teach us. I am inclined to think, though, that it was only while the king, before whom the dish was sat, was occupied in eating it. Indeed, it is highly improbable that the blackbirds would, even if they could, — which in itself is problematical, — continue to sing after being devoured by the king, and torn, probably, limb from limb, after the latest Sepoy fashion.

When I spoke of this pie to Fred, who had come home to take his Thanksgiving dinner with us, and asked him how he would have liked to see its counterpart on our table, he gave me to understand that it would have pleased him amazingly; but for his part, he said, he should like to know

the king's name who was served with so dainty a repast. I was obliged to confess my entire ignorance of it; whereupon Mrs. Axsey, who had been an attentive listener, said that she had heard tell about that pie a good many years ago, but she had never believed in its truth till now. Fred said he did n't believe it even now, and asked uncle Gregory if *he* did. Gregory replied that he was not prepared to answer the question at present; but that, after thinking about it a few years, he might be able to do so.

"I suspicion," said Mrs. Axsey, with an eye to business hereafter, "that when your uncle Gregory gets one or two little shavers who learn to read consarning this curious pie, in the what-do-you-call-it book?" — "Mother Goose," suggested Fred. — "Yes, that 's it precisely, Mother Goose book, that he 'll be better able to tell you then all about it than he be now."

At the conclusion of this speech of Mrs. Axsey's, which had a visible effect upon those around the table, a silence ensued, during which Kate busied herself with peeling an orange; Lilly ate a philopena with Fred; I, with an untasted glass of wine in my hand, considered the color very attentively; while Gregory, adjusting his eye-glass, gazed sternly through it at Mrs. Axsey opposite, who, pleased with herself, smiled graciously in return, until frightened by Gregory, who broke the silence with exclaiming, "Zounds! madam." Immediately thereafter Kate nodded to Lilly, and then both, with Mrs. Axsey bringing up the rear, departed for the drawing-room, leaving Gregory Fred, and myself lingering at the table.

"What a confounded old woman!" said Gregory, the moment the dining-room door closed between Mrs. Axsey and himself.

"Do you think so?" I asked, smiling at his vehemence.

"Yes," he answered; "fifty thousand cradles rock her to death!"

"But Fred, here," I continued, "considers her a very kind-hearted, estimable old lady. Do you not, Fred?"

"To be sure I do," he replied. "Did n't she send me, while I was off to boarding-school, a great lot of ginger-snaps, and a plum-cake, and a pumpkin-pie!"

"Did she, though?" asked Gregory. "Well, that was kind, and I declare I'll send her a barrel of flour, to repay her for this kindness, to-morrow." And Gregory kept his word.

We remained long over our nuts and wine, discussing plans for the future. Christmas-day is the one appointed for the wedding, which is to take place at Allen-Dale, and immediately after the ceremony the "happy couple" expect to depart on a Southern tour, — Cuba being the limit and tarrying point in the journey. On their return, which will not be until spring, they will make Allen-Dale their residence, "though," said Gregory, winking at me over the top of his glass, "I shall retain 'The Hemlocks' — leaving Pompey in charge — as a place of retreat, in case I find that married life fails to agree with me." Of course I approved of this plan of Gregory's, and told him that the place would, doubtless, become a rallying spot for all the discontented husbands dwelling down in the valley.

Gregory said that he did not mean to retain it for such a purpose, but simply as a retreat for himself during the season of house-cleaning, and when Kate invited the "Gossipery" to tea at Allen-Dale; "and then, too," he continued, "if a bachelor friend or so from the city should run up to see me, for a few days' fishing or shooting, why, he could make himself more comfortable at 'The Hemlocks' than at Allen-Dale, and altogether, I think, enjoy himself better there than here, which I am sure I should do, for I should not fear our convivialities were disturbing the whole house, nor keeping Kate and Lilly awake."

"Very considerate in you, truly," I replied; "but, my dear Gregory, you will find out that these little convivial

affairs, which are well enough in one's bachelor days, will have to be dispensed with when you come to have a wife. She will doubtless think it advisable for you to stay at home with her rather than to be entertaining any bachelor friends around the festive board. You will know the tree of good and evil, the felicities and infelicities of married life. Your Bacchic songs will soon all be sung, old boy; your last fair one toasted; your last flirtation see its end. You 've seen your last bachelor season at Newport, essayed *les lanciers*, in the ball-room, with the daring Miss Dash, for the last time; and when next you meet the Marys and Fannys — pretty girls enough! — with whom you drove on the beach, you will be a staid married man, and they will acknowledge your bow politely, but calmly, for you will have ceased to be anything to them.

As I finished speaking, Gregory, somewhat excited, uttered, I am sorry to say, the name of the father of lies; and then, draining his glass, rose suddenly from the table and proceeded to join the ladies.

Then turning to Fred, who, all the time Gregory and myself had been talking, was engaged in searching through the almond dish for philopenas to eat with Lilly, and had obtained a full plate of them, "Fred," I said, "how are you progressing in your studies at school? Do you diligently apply yourself to your books?"

Fred guessed that he did.

"And do you remember all that you learn?" I inquired.

"Certainly," Fred replied; "and I like geography the best of all my studies, because it tells about foreign places and Bagdad."

"Bagdad?" I repeated, interrogatively.

"Yes, Bagdad," said Fred; "and it's there I 'm agoing one of these days."

"Why to Bagdad?" I asked.

"Oh! to see it," Fred replied, "and to find out whether the 'Arabian Nights' is all true."

"Then you think that that fact can be ascertained at Bagdad?"

"To be sure it can," said Fred; "and while there I'll buy me a lot of perfumes, — attar of rose and all those sort of smells. John Growsy, now at school, has five or six different kinds on his wash-stand, done up in little glass bottles, with colored labels; and he has ox-marrow, and bear's-grease, and oils for his hair. His handkerchiefs are always scented with violets and poppies, and them flowers, and his head smells just exactly like wintergreen candy. Smell of my hair now," and Fred marched around to my side of the table, the better to give me an opportunity of gratifying my olfactory organs. "What do you smell?" he asked, as he put his curly pate near my face.

"Why, I should say tallow," I replied.

"Oh, pshaw!" cried Fred, "it's sassafras, that's what it is. I bought a bottle of buffalo-grease to-day, and rubbed it on my hair, and it smells real strong of the pure extract of sassafras — that's just what the man said whom I bought it of."

"Ah! Fred," I exclaimed, "we both have our little weaknesses, — the son and the father, — the one oils his hair and the other dyes his whiskers. Well, well, time runs apace. We shall both of us be bald, perhaps, before we die. Come, let us go to join your uncle Gregory and the ladies." And we went.

XII.

THE NEW CHURCH. — THE OLD CHURCH. — THE TOLLING BELL.—SWALLOWS.—SQUARE PEWS.—BOYS AT PLAY. JACKKNIVES. — DREAMS. — THE OLD RECTOR. — THE VESTRY. — RESOLUTIONS. — THE NEW CLERGYMAN. — SPIDERS AND FLIES. — REFORM. — ORGAN *vs.* BASS-VIOL.— GREG'S IMMOLATION. — "THEN AND NOW."

WE have a new church down in the valley. Within this sacred edifice Gregory and Kate expect to be married. If anything can add to the cheerful solemnity, as Mrs. Axsey would say, of the wedding ceremony, it is, I think, to have it performed in a new church. A new church is redolent of christenings and sunrisings; but an old church seems musty with funerals and night. Our old church was a tumble-down affair, with cracked walls, and sunken tower, and tottering belfry. In a high wind the church rocked to its foundation-stones, and the window-sashes rattled, and the hands of the clock were blown wildly round and round, regardless of the hours; while the bell, on which is inscribed a scrap of old Latin, tolled mournfully, and of stormy nights kept the children of the neighborhood awake with its dismal tones, and frightened unprotected females half to death, who were superstitious enough to believe that the evil one inhabited the belfry and tolled the bell whenever he beheld some wicked deed perpetrated down in the valley. This, of course, was sheer nonsense; for the old church had as little to do with the evil spirits as any church in the village; and so, for the good name of the old church, I would declare that this was a base and malignant slander.

The belfry was, however, a place famous as the resort of numberless swallows; and near sunset, in the summer time, hundreds of these swift-winged birds glided in and out, and sailed to and fro around the belfry, till, as night closed, they at first, one by one, then in pairs and by threes and fours, and at last in whole flocks, disappeared within it; where, for a long time, they kept up a noisy twittering, increased whenever a belated bird arriving, dropped, in seemingly unexpected and undesired, on them. They, however, always managed to make room for the new-comer; and at last, with their heads buried in their feathers, they sunk to rest.

For years Kate and I found much amusement in watching these swallows that, summer after summer, wheeled about the steeple in their airy flight, or fluttered around the vane, alighting perhaps for a moment upon it, and then suddenly, with the swiftness of an arrow from the string, cleaving the evening air and disappearing in the distance. Kate has said that she recognized, on each returning summer, some individual swallows who had grown gray sweeping about the spire year after year.

In the old church were square pews, occupied by the wealthier portion of the congregation, who sat around little tables, and looked for all the world as if at a tea-party; though there was no food for the body on the little tables, only food for the soul, which, after all, was much better. The backs of the pews were so high that they completely hid from sight the little boys and girls seated within; and, thereby screened from the searching eyes of the old clergyman, they failed not to make faces at each other, and play all manner of fantastic tricks. Thus protected, too, the larger boys read Sunday-school books during church-time, and even carved their names with jackknives on the seats, instead of attending, as they should, to the sermon. Some of the older portion of the congregation, especially those who sat with their backs towards the minister, took short

and secret naps, during which they dreamed dreams purely of a secular character, and in no way connected with the church or church affairs; and when not taking their naps they were engaged in making little business calculations in their heads; or, with stubby cedar pencils, figured up their past week's profit or loss, as it might be, on the fly-leaves of their prayer-books. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that religion in the old church was at a low ebb; and that the saints' days and the fastdays marked in the Church's calendar were but illy kept; and that the congregation became more and more dormant, and less willing to attend to the duties of the sanctuary, with every revolving year. They became dissatisfied not only with themselves, but likewise with the old clergyman, and spoke some slanderous things concerning him, which, reaching his ears, made him provoked and dissatisfied in turn with them, and finally careless as to his own duties. He preached over and over old sermons, which the more attentive portion of the congregation knew by heart, until he at last, quite disheartened, died and was buried.

Most of the congregation shed a few tears over the coffin containing his remains, as it lay in front of the chancel, on the day of his funeral; and, in a Christian spirit, while remembering his many virtues, forgot his few faults. Even the vestry, which, as a body, had needlessly embittered his last days, by passing a resolution requesting him to resign his charge of the parish, — to which request, however, he refused to accede, because, as he said, he desired to die their rector, — met again, and passed another resolution, expressive of their regard for the deceased, recognizing his eminent virtues, and bewailing the irreparable loss which the parish had sustained in his demise; and, further, resolving that if ever (*Deus vult*) they should erect a new church, which subject was just at that time beginning to be agitated by some of the younger members of the congregation, they would place in the chancel a window, commem-

orative of his life-long devotion and zeal to the interest of his church and parish; and then they adjourned and returned to their homes, satisfied that they had done their duty both to the deceased and themselves. Perhaps they had; but Gregory said some sarcastic and bitter things about them, notwithstanding their flattering resolutions.

So it came to pass that a younger man, who had gladly accepted the silver call the vestry gave to him, succeeded the old clergyman, and immediately set himself to work to reform the parish and arouse it from the deathly stupor — I quote his own words — which had crept over it during the last and failing years of his predecessor in the holy office. The new clergyman had youth, eloquence, perseverance, and faith in his own pureness of purpose, to aid him in his efforts; so it is not at all strange that, in a short time, a remarkable and improved change was noticeable both in the attendance and conduct of his congregation. Even the old church itself underwent an improvement. The walls and ceilings were whitewashed; the cobwebs that for years had adorned every angle and festooned every practicable point, and wherein myriads of unsuspecting flies had fallen victims to crafty and cruel spiders, were swept down, and, with their tyrannical proprietors, were vaingloriously destroyed. The broken lights of glass through which the winters' snows and the summers' showers had entered, were removed, and whole ones inserted. The windows themselves were washed both outside and in, and the pulpit and lecturn newly painted and cushioned. The sounding-board over the pulpit was removed, and the backs and fronts of the pews razeed. The little tables disappeared, and kneeling-stools took their places.

In due time the new clergyman induced the congregation to purchase an organ in the place of the double bass-viol, whose bow the old music-teacher who sang through his nose had angularly, if not gracefully and scientifically,

wielded from time immemoral; and who, alas for "Old Hundred"! had to give way to an accomplished musician from the city, who improvised voluntaries on the organ, which, however, sounded very much like dancing-tunes slowly played; and, further, introduced silver plates — at least they resemble silver — to be used at the offertory, instead of the long-handled contribution-boxes heretofore employed.

During the second year of the young clergyman's incumbency, the corner-stone of the new church was laid with appropriate ceremonies; and twenty months thereafter the edifice was completed. It is in this church that Gregory and Kate, on Christmas-day, are to be married. Gregory, who, as I have elsewhere mentioned, was not a church-going man, owing, probably, to the puritanical strictness with which his early religious education was conducted, accompanied me to the church, for the first time since its consecration, on Thanksgiving-day, to behold the spot, as he expressed it, whereon he was to suffer immolation. So pleased was Gregory with the Church service and the sermon of the young clergyman, which he considered equal to any of the printed ones that fill a portion of his library-shelves, that he has each successive Sunday accompanied me thither, and avows his determination, henceforth, to attend the same.

That Gregory sees some things in and about the new church and congregation that displease him, I gather from the following lines, which he wrote a few days after his second Sunday in church, and which he handed to me for my approval. The lines in question are entitled

THEN AND NOW. — BY A "MISERABLE SINNER."

In temples built by God himself —
The leafy groves so fair —
His first and purest worshippers
Praised Him with psalm and prayer,

With lute, and harp, and timbrel, they
  Essayed His love to hymn;
Their tongues with hallelujahs rung,
  Their eyes with tears were dim.

On verdant plains, on rocky heights,
  His altars were upreared,
And there, for pious sacrifice,
  They morn and eve appeared.

In woods primeval first they knelt,
  And lowly words of prayer
To God in supplication fell
  Upon the fragrant air.

The hills and mountains round about
  In solemn grandeur rose,
The winds were hushed, the running brooks
  Were stilled in soft repose.

The forest-trees on every side
  In silent beauty stood,
And cast a shadow, broad and dark,
  Within the sacred wood.

And there fresh hearts went out to God,
  In humbleness and love,
And when life's pilgrimage was closed,
  They passed to homes above.

We leave the groves, — God's temples, —
  To raise, with righteous care,
Our costly shrines and lofty piles,
  To be His seats of prayer.

We build of stone each sacred place,
  And to increase its worth,
We raise a roof of stately height
  Above our mother earth.

We plant a tower of massive strength
  Beside our holy fane,
Erect a heaven-pointing spire,
  Significant but vain.

We crown the whole with gilded cross,
On which the golden sun
First sheds its earliest matin rays, —
Its last when day is done.

Within are Gothic windows, rich
In diamond-pointed panes,
Through which the precious sunlight falls
In rainbow-colored stains.

The chancel-rails are richly carved,
In high artistic style;
The altar is a work of art,
The jewel of the pile.

O'er it, each Sabbath in the year,
A fair white cloth is spread,
And standing near, the man of God
Pours wine and breaketh bread.

And in the nave tall columns rise,
Symmetrical to view,
With ceilings groined and pencilled walls,
All stained a dainty hue.

And, lo! between the columns
Are cushioned seats of ease,
Where sit the wealthy worshippers,
Nor bend their stubborn knees;

Nor lift their stony hearts in prayer,
Nor think of Him who died,
With crown of thorns upon His brow —
Their Lord, the Crucified.

For them 't is all-sufficient
If each but bows his head
When solemn prayers are offered,
Or the litany is read.

No need for them to utter,
In penitential grief,
The prayers through which the sinners
Are seeking for relief.

Indeed, such words were useless
For them to utter there,
Unless, in sweet humility,
They sought His loving care.

But next the wall the poor man kneels,
And prays with fervent zeal,
And though his clothes be coarse and old,
God careth for his weal.

He cannot see the white-robed priest, —
The columns interfere, —
But he can hear the living words
That fill his listening ear.

And if no sparrow falls to earth,
Unnoticed by His eye,
Much less His sovereign love and care
Will pass the poor man by.

Cheer up, brave hearts! though coarse and thin
The garments which you wear,
They will be changed to angel robes,
Most glorious and rare.

God grant that, in these troubled times,
Both rich and poor may place
Their safe reliance in the Lord,
And seek His smiling face.

And then though moth and rust corrupt,
And thieves break through and steal,
His mercy 'll temper every loss
Of fortune's changing wheel.

And they who worship in a church,
And those without who pray —
Both rich and poor — should bless the Lord,
Who keeps them day by day.

XIII.

GREGORY GETS READY TO BE MARRIED. — ORPHAN ASYLUM. — PETER COOPER. — WHAT THE YOUNG LAWYER SAID. — HOW HE PLAYS CHESS. — GREGORY'S ADVICE. MRS. AXSEY SPEAKS. — TEMPTING PROVIDENCE. — THE LATE MR. A. — "A BACHELOR'S LEGACY."

GREGORY GRUMM is the busiest man, nowadays, of which I know. He is settling up his bachelor estate, and he appears to give his whole mind to it. He is paying all kinds of bills, and writing all manner of billets. Pompey is reaping a harvest of cast-off clothing. No "old clothing" establishment in Chatham Street could make a larger display of second-hand articles of a single gentleman's wardrobe than Pompey. Gregory is determined to leave, not only his bachelor garments — his roundabouts and loose trousers — behind him, but also his bachelor habits. The bit of advice which I gave him on Thanksgiving-day, while at the dinner-table, took root, and blossomed and bore fruit. Having wisely concluded not to retain the Hemlocks as a rendezvous for his bachelor friends, he is going to convert it into an orphan asylum, and has already deeded the place to the Golden-Rule Society for that purpose. The old ladies speak of him as a philanthropist, and the young lawyer who received the deed in trust for the society made Gregory a brief speech at the time, and termed him another Howard — also, a second Peter Cooper. Gregory is quite modest, but I am inclined to think that he was greatly pleased with having his humble name coupled with that of Peter Cooper. "Ah!" said he to me, as we sat talking over this affair, a few hours after the

presentation of the deed, — "ah!" he repeated, "that young lawyer is a very clever fellow — so intelligent, so discerning, so perfectly correct in everything he states. By the way, it was very kind in him, was n't it? to speak in the manner he did of me, in connection with Cooper. A rising young man, sir; I should not be at all surprised if he became a chief-justice one of these days. Well, well, Peter Cooper, to be sure." And Gregory wreathed his head with the smoke from a final bachelor cigar, until he seemed crowned with a civic wreath.

I may as well here mention that the rising young man alluded to passes a great deal of his time both at the Hemlocks and at Allen-Dale. He seems to have suddenly taken wonderfully to Gregory and myself. He declares that our conversation improves his mind; that every word we utter is as good as a page of Blackstone to him, and that the jokes of Punch are as nothing compared with those which we get off. He comes purposely, he says, to play chess with me, and "old sledge" with Gregory. Somehow, though, we neither of us ever get to playing a game with him. Often has it happened that when I have been to get the chess-men, I have found him, on my return, so completely crinolined into a corner by Miss Lilly as to be utterly unable to extricate himself from her toils. The poor fellow, I knew all the time, wished to get away so as to enjoy a silent game with me, but was actually compelled, since there was no way of getting around and past the crinoline, to remain with Lilly and listen to her talk concerning gloves, King Charles spaniels, Newport, and "Nothing to Wear." It does appear a little singular, however, that he — the rising young lawyer — never comes to play chess with me except on such evenings as Lilly chances to be at Allen-Dale; and that he goes to the Hemlocks to play with Gregory only when Lilly is there.

But to go back to Gregory. So completely is he possessed with the one idea of getting married that he can

never let the subject rest more than an hour at a time. He is continually advising some one to get married. He recommends it to me fifty times a day; and when I ask him who shall I marry, he replies, Kate, or Lilly, or Mrs. Axsey, or any one, indeed, so long as you get married. He gives the same advice to Pompey, and to Jasper Millikens, and to the rising young man — the latter of whom promised Gregory that he would attentively consider the matter, and if he could consistently follow his advice he would certainly do so, and I, for my part, have no doubt but that the "clever fellow" will.

Gregory has been employing his leisure moments in composing some verses, which he entitles, "A Bachelor's Legacy." It is, indeed, a poetical bequest of various items, which he in his ignorance conceives will be no more wanted by him in his married state. Some of these, which he so pleasantly leaves to sundry friends, he may possibly not require under the new order of things; but it strikes me that the proportion of articles therein named would prove, as Mrs. Axsey says, "just as handy" to a married man as to a bachelor. But I shall let Gregory find out all this himself. Because he is intending to spend a few months in the South is not a good reason, therefore, why he should make bequests of the nature below narrated. He could not do much otherwise if he were going to die, and it was his will that he had drawn up. It lacks the usual form of such testaments, to be sure; but Mrs. Axsey declares that it is just no more nor less than a will done up in rhyme, and that, for her part, she considers it's tempting Providence for a man, in good health, "to "squat down in cold blood" and write such a "docyment." "Now, there," said she, "was my Number Two; he was jest as likely and healthy a man — only he was n't so large and solidary as Mister Grumm is — as any you could 'ave scared up, and who would 'ave lived for sixty years, perhaps, if not longer, had n't he, like a great coot, gone off one day to Squire

Davis's an' got him to write off a sermonlike will. I disremember now exactly how it commenced, but I know that 'amen' was in it somewhere. Well, he left everything on earth that he owned, in that will, to me, and what was the consequence? Why, that very night he was took badly with fits, and 'fore another week he gin up the ghost. And I always persisted in saying that if it had n't been for that will-making, my Number Two would have been living now."

"Which would certainly," I added, "have made it extremely disagreeable for the late Mr. Axsey."

"Well, now, I must allow," exclaimed Mrs. A., "that it sartinly never struck me in that light before. La, suz! I guess it would 'ave riled Axsey a good deal. Well, Providence is Providence, after all; ain't it?"

I "allowed" that it was, and further suggested that will-making, all things considered, was not only highly proper, but really commendable, under some circumstances.

Mrs. Axsey coincided with me; and then I read aloud, so that she might perceive how near to a will they approached, the following verses: —

A BACHELOR'S LEGACY.

Full forty years I 've single dwelt,
And scarcely known a sorrow;
Fortune with me has kindly dealt,
And now I never borrow;
For gold nor silver do I lack,
I 've bank-notes by the ream, sir,
Of mortgages I have a stack,
And drive a double team, sir.

I 've lived a solitary life,
Along with my old *valet*,
But now I mean to take a wife —
Some one down in the valley;
And so, as I no more shall need
My bachelor enjoyments,
I 'll let my wild oats run to seed,
And follow grave employments.

To Pompey I bequeath my hat,
My stockings, boots, and collars,
My boxing-gloves, my ball and bat,
And fifty golden dollars.
To Mrs. Axsey, all forlorn,
I leave my hen and chickens,
The kitchen-stove, — 't is somewhat worn, —
The cupboard, with its pickings.

To Parson Wright, who never wrong
To man or beast intended,
I leave the burden of a song,
That never can be ended, —
A grateful one of thanks and praise,
And eke some sermons musty,
Preached by my father in the days
When he was old and crusty.

To my good friend the Doctor, who
Likes Timothy's direction,
A cask of brandy, marked "Old Q,"
I leave for his inspection;
One case of sparkling Champagne wine,
A box of choice Havanas,
The table off of which I dine,
My work on "Social Manners."

I leave my various games of chance,
A cooking-book by Soyer,
My sightly list of "wines of France,"
Unto our rising lawyer;
My patent bang-up corkscrew, too,
A jar of piccalilli,
My latch-key, just as good as new,
But not my gentle Lilly.

To Fred, the rascal! I bequeath
My silver mug and sandals,
My MS. poems, styled "The Wreath,"
And half a dozen candles,
My story-books of fairy lore,
With cuts of dwarf and giant,
And portraits, too, of Little Jack,
And others as defiant.

I leave to Paul my diamond ring,
  And Lilly White to tend him,
Each evening must she play and sing,
  And while I 'm gone befriend him;
And oh! my friend of other days,
  To you I do appeal, sir,
That you will follow in my ways,
  And find your woe or weal, sir.

XIV.

CHRISTMAS NIGHT. — TEN YEARS AGO. — A CHRISTMAS PARTY. — KATE AND I; HER STORY AND MINE. — THE MARRIAGE. — IN THE CHURCH. — GREG'S ESCAPE. — DIMES AND QUARTERS. — THE DINNER. — MRS. AXSEY AND MILLIKINS. — NO. FOUR. — A SECRET. — THE LAST FAREWELL. — ALONE.

T is Christmas night, and I am alone in the old stone house down in the valley — alone with but my own thoughts to keep me company. The fire, which all day long had sent great shafts of flame up the wide-throated chimney, and had thrown out into the room a cheerful warmth and ruddy light, is now smouldering on the hearth. I hear only the ticking of the hall-clock behind the door, and the wind wailing mournfully around the corners of the house and about the lofty gables. Once in my life before, on Christmas night, have I sat alone battling with sorrow. Then, as now, the wind sobbed like a broken-hearted child around my home. Then, as now, the fire flickered and died away, and the old clock said, "Forever — never." But a heavier grief was on my heart then than there is now. My home appeared more desolate, and I seemed more alone in the world than now. Only a few days previous I had laid my young wife in her solitary grave; and though I had heard the frozen earth rattle on her coffin, and seen the grave filled up and rounded over, and watched the falling snow, till even all semblance of the grave itself was hidden from sight, I had failed to realize, in its full extent, how totally alone I was in the wide world; but as I recalled to my mind the

Christmas nights gone by, wherein she and I had sat side by side, and, after long grappling with the idea, as if it were a hideous nightmare, had at last succeeded in fully realizing that never again on earth, at Christmas, or on any other day in all coming years, would she and I meet around our blazing fire, did grief, with its crushing weight of agony, press upon my heart.

And now, after ten years have elapsed, am I again spending the Christmas night alone. Time, it is true, has assuaged the bitterness of my sorrow, and blessed memories of her whom I have lost come to fill its place in my mind; but still the terrible feeling of loneliness, which I recollect then to have experienced, returns with even redoubled force upon my soul. Then, though a gulf was between us, I felt that I could measure it by days; but now we are divided by a gulf of years, and though something within me whispers that the years I have passed over that separate her from me, are greater in number than the years to come, which stand between us, I fail to realize it, and only see the gulf widening behind me, nor behold the narrowing one before.

I said I was alone, on Christmas night, in the old stone house down in the valley. It is even so. Gregory and Kate are married and gone. Fred and Lilly accompanied them as far as to the city. The young clergyman who performed the ceremony, and who, afterwards, with a few friends, repaired to Allen-Dale, to partake of the united wedding and Christmas dinner, long since departed, leaving me to solitude and reflection.

Last night Allen-Dale was alive with guests. Not a room in the house that was not thrown open to the party assembled. Christmas stories were told, Christmas carols were sung, Christmas games were played, and Christmas cakes were eaten. The Yule log blazed in the hall chimney; the holly and mistletoe hung from the ceiling; sprigs of cedar adorned the window-panes, and wreaths of ever-

green festooned the walls. The wassail-bowl overflowed on the sideboard, and hundreds of waxen candles consumed slowly away; cheeks and lips were kissed, hands were secretly pressed, and dainty forms were tenderly clasped as their owners whirled in the giddy dance. Thus merrily sped Christmas eve; and only after the hour when it is said that oxen kneel in their stalls, and when Christmas greetings had been joyfully exchanged by one and all of those assembled, did the party begin to disperse. And when the last guest had gone, and Gregory, even, had departed, and Lilly and Fred said, "Good-night," then did Kate and I — feeling that it was for the last time — sit side by side, before the still blazing fire, and recall, not without tears as well as smiles, the Christmas eves we two had passed together. Of all, however, that was spoken by us to each other, none will ever know. There are matters too sacred and precious to be laid before a curious public; and Kate's story of her early love, so touching in its character, and so honorable to her woman's nature, — of which she had never breathed to me a syllable before, — must forever remain buried in my own bosom. I, too, had a story of love, not so old a one as Kate's, but of later date, even of the present, of which she had never heard, that I might have told her, but which, for her sake as well as my own, I pressed down into a corner of my heart, beside the buried hopes and fears of long ago. Is it any wonder, then, that, as I sit alone this Christmas night, I should feel my desolateness even as I did ten years ago?

Morning was breaking before Kate and I parted, and as I kissed the tears from her cheeks, she clasped my hand and cried, "God bless you, Paul; forever bless and keep you!" and thus the ten years of life which we had so happily passed together down in the valley came to an end. For, on the morrow — this very morning, though it seems to me an age ago — when we again met, Gregory stood prepared to take her from me; and so just before

the hour of the Christmas morning's services, we repaired to the new church, and, standing in the body of the church, the twain were made one; and as the early comers to church entered its doors, the blessing was pronounced, and the wedding party turned down the aisle and entered my pew to join in the Christmas praises. Then the bell high up in the tower of the new church rung a merry peal, so that every one down in the valley knew that a marriage had taken place, and with, I thought, a greater speed and anxiety than usual, the congregation hastened to church. Of course the sexon, while he tolled the bell, also told the people as they passed him, who it were that had been stealing a march upon them. Great was the wonderment, and surprise, and whisperings that ensued, when the fact that it was Kate, and not Lilly, whom Gregory had married, was fully known.

It was with difficulty that the young clergyman could obtain the attention of any one of his congregation long enough for them to understand more than the subject of his discourse. Every eye turned irresistibly toward Gregory and Kate. She failed to show, by any visible sign of emotion, that she knew herself to be the target of all eyes. She bore her new honors with womanly dignity, and never for a moment betrayed any discomposure. Gregory, on the contrary, displayed his feelings very plainly. He grew red and white by turns, coughed till he nearly strangled, wiped great beads of perspiration from his brow, and had not Kate turned on him a wife's rebuking glance, he would have rushed from the church before the sermon was ended. As it was, he fled the moment it came to a close, "to escape," he whispered to me, as he reached over for his hat, "the confounded congratulations of the congregation."

When, after the services were concluded, and Kate — who, at my suggestion, had escaped receiving the good wishes of the assembly, by departing through the robing-room — had reached the street, we found Gregory waiting

for us in the bridal sleigh, with Jasper Millikins on the box, and engaged in tossing dimes and quarters to the roguish boys of the village, who were wishing him any amount of joy. If ever a husband were glad to see his wife coming toward him, it was Gregory; for his small change was getting scarce, and he would soon have been obliged to distribute his bank-bills. So, getting into the sleigh, Jasper cracked his whip, and the four white horses, as with one will, started forward, amid the cheers of the crowd, for Allen-Dale.

It was a small but merry party that met around our Christmas board;— Gregory and Kate; the young clergyman and his betrothed; the rising young lawyer and Lilly; the old doctor, Gregory's family physician; Fred and myself. Mrs. Axsey, who had attended to the getting up of the dinner, just after it was placed on the table, disappeared. What had become of the old lady no one knew; but still her absence did not prevent our enjoyment of it. When the young clergyman had asked a blessing with, it appeared to me, a degree of unctuousness seldom witnessed, the feast began. Though many good things were eaten and drunk, and many good jokes and speeches made, it was not until we were on the point of rising from the table, and when Gregory had just concluded his farewell speech, that the crowning act of the day's proceedings took place. Then, at a preconcerted signal given by the young clergyman, the wide sliding-doors were opened, and arm in arm into the dining-room walked Mrs. Axsey and Jasper Millikins. The clergyman stepped forward, book in hand, and then and there proceeded to make the couple man and wife.

"Now then," exclaimed Mrs. Millikins, the moment the knot was tied, "I kinder guess I 've got my number four."

The only person present who seemed at all desirous of disputing this point was Number Four himself, who shook his head in a negative style, and slowly opened his mouth

as if to speak; but as his "lady" paid no attention to him, he wisely closed it again, and contented himself by thrusting his hands deep down into his trousers' pockets, and changing the situation of the tobacco within his mouth; while she continued, "I kinder guess, tew, that ef any pusson can keep a secret better 'n me, you 'll have hard work to pint 'em out. Now here 's my Jasper, I knowed he 'd never be able to keep his mouth shet ef I told him we was agoing to git married; so I never let on to him a word about it till after he druv back from church, and ef the hull thing did n't take my gentleman by surprise, then I agree to gin up knowing what a surprise is. But he were, I must allow, most oncommon willin' to be my Number Four, and I did n't hev to coax him one single bit; but he come along with me jest for all the world like a critter to the slaughter."

Then, with much merriment, we drank the last bride and groom's health; and as soon as he could conveniently, Jasper, with a bottle of champagne under each arm, retired to the kitchen, where he was laid out in an incredibly short space of time.

This wedding threw the first entirely into the shade, and when Gregory and Kate rode down to the railroad station, there was scarce a dozen persons present to gaze at them, the great bulk of the villagers being occupied in hunting up Jasper Millikins, in hope of obtaining a speech from him.

So Kate and Gregory went away, accompanied by Fred and Lilly, and taking Pompey, who will travel with them and attend to their wants; and I, Paul, am left alone and sad, this Christmas night, within the old stone house, DOWN IN THE VALLEY.

THE END.

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